

REPRESENTATION OF 'IDEAL IMAGE OF WOMAN' IN  
MARTHA STEWART AND HARUMI KURIHARA'S  
COOKING MAGAZINES

by

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## ABSTRACT

Even though there are many studies on domestic advice experts, the total coordination of lifestyle, and the images of women promoted through commercialized domesticity, there has been comparatively little research into the relationship between domesticity and women's images in different cultures, particularly through cooking magazines. In this thesis, I will compare two periodicals, Martha Stewart's *Martha Stewart Living* (MSL) and Harumi Kurihara's *haru\_mi* in order to examine how Stewart and Kurihara convey their images of homemaker through their magazines, how and why they are different (such as cultural, linguistic, social, and economic factors) and the kinds of messages they send to their readers. In order to answer these questions, the following issues will be discussed: 1) the historical background of women in society in both the U.S. and Japan, with a focus on changes in the roles of women in society during 1960s to 1990s, 2) how Stewart and Kurihara manipulate their images as homemakers in their magazines in order to promote not only the lifestyles they suggest but more so for their products, and 3) the kinds of influences Stewart and Kurihara have had on their readers through magazines and their products.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

If Martha Stewart represents the quintessential homemaker in America, Harumi Kurihara is her counterpart in Japan. They are both widely popular among women from their 20s to their 60s. They both have their own brands of cooking tools, dishes, aprons and home decorative items, and starting in 1990, began publishing a series of cooking magazines. Since then, they have been the leading figures in the U.S. and Japan, respectively, in turning homemaking into a lifestyle choice. Despite establishing successful business careers, both Stewart and Kurihara maintain the image of the stereotypical "homemaker," who can perform housekeeping tasks perfectly as though they were not working women who hold down demanding jobs outside the home.

Stewart is an enormously successful businesswoman. Simultaneously, she maintains an on-screen image of a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) homemaker who wears casual clothes all the time. By contrast, in Stewart's magazines, pictures of her editors in business suits can be found, as if they demonstrate what a successful businesswoman should look like. By maintaining this public image of a homemaker, I argue that Stewart's creative ideas for cooking, home décor, gardening, and crafts introduced through her magazines, cookbooks and TV shows become more persuasive to her readers.

Not controlling as large a business as Stewart's, Kurihara is still a very successful businesswoman. She publishes her own magazines, hosts TV cooking shows both in Japanese and in English, and sells her own brand of products ranging from kitchen items to casual clothes. While the average sales of a cookbook in Japan are around 20,000 copies, her cookbooks have sold more than 100,000 per title (Mori 43, Kibayashi 61). Even with such success, Kurihara maintains the image of a simple homemaker who enjoys housekeeping tasks, gardening and cooking.

Even though there are many studies on domestic advice experts, the total coordination of lifestyle, and the images of women promoted through commercialized domesticity, there has been comparatively little research into the relationship between domesticity and women's images in different cultures, particularly through cooking magazines. In this thesis, I will compare two periodicals, Martha Stewart's *Martha Stewart Living* (MSL) and Harumi Kurihara's *haru\_mi*, in order to examine how Stewart and Kurihara convey their images of homemaker through their magazines, how and why they are different (such as cultural, linguistic, social, and economic factors) and the kinds of messages they send to their readers. In order to answer these questions, the following issues will be discussed: 1) the historical background of women in society in both the U.S. and Japan, with a focus on changes in the roles of women in society during 1960s to 1990s, 2) how Stewart and Kurihara manipulate their images as homemakers in their magazines in order to promote not only the lifestyles they suggest but more so for their products, and 3) the kinds of influences Stewart and Kurihara have had on their readers through magazines and their products.



Stewart and Kurihara are influential enough to have created a phenomenon among women. For example, fans of Martha Stewart decorate their houses exactly the same way as they see in *MSL* (Leavitt 3). In Japan, there is a large number of female fans who mimic Kurihara's fashion and style (for example, Kurihara always wears a French short-sleeved T-shirt or a striped T-shirt with cotton pants, and her fans do the same). I argue that Stewart and Kurihara not only demonstrate what a homemaker should look like, they also produce an "idealized image" of a homemaker who is independent and pursues a better quality of life defined in various ways, especially in how they "enjoy" housekeeping tasks. Such an idealized image of a homemaker reflects Stewart's and Kurihara's values and the perspectives only shared by a certain upper or higher level social class. They both repeatedly use the word "enjoy" in their magazines. In Stewart's case, she elevates housekeeping tasks as "enjoyable" activities while Kurihara often uses the word "enjoy" (*tanoshii* 楽しい<sup>1</sup>) with a notion of "satisfaction" that comes from mastering unfamiliar tasks through practice. The word "enjoy" is a verb that describes an emotional reaction based on an activity an individual engages. However, what makes a person enjoy something depends on one's social, cultural, and economic background. For example, a person who has more financial resources and leisure time is more likely to "enjoy" activities that these two domestic advisors promote than those who do not have such resources. Therefore, the various activities that Stewart and Kurihara promote may not be accessible to all readers. However, many readers of Stewart's and Kurihara's magazines adopt advice from the respective magazines and are influenced by their advice

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<sup>1</sup> Grammatically in Japanese, the word *tanoshii* 楽しい can be translated as having a good time or fun, or a notion of creativity. However, I chose to translate it as "enjoy" because it suits better in the context of *haru\_mi* and the way Kurihara uses it in interviews. The meaning of "enjoy" is explained in the main text.

within the permissible range of their own lifestyle. Therefore, the enjoyment they feel is also limited.

In this thesis, I define „homemaker“ as a woman who is primarily responsible for housekeeping tasks regardless of her marital or employment status whether working full-time, part-time, or not employed outside the home. Furthermore, a homemaker who is not working, but taking care of her children and the housekeeping tasks as her main job, is defined as a „stay-at home“ homemaker. There are more meanings attached to the word „homemaker“ in Japanese society. In fact, the word „housewife“ is more commonly used than „homemaker“ in Japan. Many women categorize themselves as a „housewife“ when they are asked their occupation (Hara 71). The word „housewife<sup>2</sup>“ limits its gender to women, and it is strongly connected to an ideology called *ryōsai kenbo* (good wife, wise mother) that the Japanese government promoted from the late 1800s. Women who sacrificed themselves to support their husbands, raise their children, and serve their families were considered to be „good“ wives and „wise“ mothers. In order for their husbands to focus on their career goals, it was a woman’s responsibility to raise the children. If they misbehaved or did not follow the father’s orders, it was typically the mothers who were blamed for not disciplining their children well. In this patriarchic Japanese society, the husband had absolute legal authority over the household and all family members, especially females, had to obey his orders. However, a husband’s success in his career and his children’s success at school depended on the support that his wife could provide.

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<sup>2</sup> The word „housewife“ is written as *shufu* (主婦), which literary means master woman, but in today’s Japanese society there is a word „househusband“ is often used to describe husbands who stay home and take care of housekeeping tasks and childrearing and their wives are at work. It has the same pronunciation as „housewife“ but written as 主夫, which means master husband.

By 1879, all children were encouraged to attend elementary school, but the purpose of education for women differed from that for men. Women's education was focused on indoctrination into the *ryōsai kenbo* ideology. This ideology was promoted more strongly during World War II. While men served in the military, women were expected to protect their households while they raised their children to be soldiers who would protect Japan. Even after the war, the ideology carried over and women continued to be expected to support their husbands and children as good wives and wise mothers. Even though the *ryōsai kenbo* ideology is not as strong as it was in the past, social expectations are still high for women to follow the ideology.<sup>3</sup> I believe that as the literal denotation of „housewife“ (master woman) indicates, the word „housewife“ still carries a strong connotation of *ryōsai kenbo*.

The notion that the „majority of housekeeping tasks are still women's responsibilities“ (Wadja 79) holds true for both the U.S. and Japan, and most readers of *MSL* and *haru\_mi* are women, according to the demographic information on who buys the magazines.<sup>4</sup> The readers of *MSL*, however, have different social, cultural and economic backgrounds from those who read *haru\_mi*. In addition, as the number of non-traditional households, such as those comprised of gay couples, single parents, and so on, increases in the U.S., the word „homemaker,“ which does not denote a particular marital status or gender, is more suitable to use in this thesis.

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<sup>3</sup> For more information about historical background about housewife, refer to Sand, Jordan. *House and Home in Modern Japan*. Harvard UP. (2003) and Hara, Hiroko. „Shufu kenkyū no susume“. *Shinpen nihon no feminisumu 3 –Sei yakuwari–*. Ed. Masako Amano, et. al. Tokyo: Iwanami, 2009. 71-87. Print.

<sup>4</sup> For more information about demographic information for these two magazines, refer to page 21 of this thesis for *MSL*, and <http://www.fusosha.co.jp/mediadata/pdf/harumi.pdf> for *haru\_mi*.

## CHAPTER 2

### MARTHA STEWART

#### A Charismatic Homemaker Becomes a Billionaire<sup>5</sup>

Martha Stewart was born in 1941 in Jersey City, New Jersey. Her father, Eddie Kostyra, worked for a pharmaceutical company and her mother, Martha Kostyra, was a homemaker. The family moved to Nutley, NJ and Stewart lived there until she graduated from high school. Stewart says she was influenced by three kitchens: her mother's, her maternal grandparents' tavern in Buffalo, NY, and that of her German immigrant neighbors the Maus family who owned a bakery. Stewart learned cooking and sewing from her mother, gardening from her father, canning and preserving food from her maternal grandparents and baking from the Maus'. While in high school, she also gained organizational skills through coordinating birthday parties for the children she babysat.

After graduating from high school, Stewart attended Barnard College in Manhattan, NY. Based on her modeling experience in magazines and TV commercials when she was in high school, she wanted to pursue a modeling career. However, she met Andy Stewart, who was a law student at Yale, and eventually they married. Stewart took a break from college and started working to support her husband who was finishing his law school education. In 1965, Stewart gave birth to a daughter, Alexis, and the couple

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<sup>5</sup> Information of this section is from Price, *Entertaining*, and Allen.

moved back to New York City. In 1968, Stewart obtained a stock broker's license and started working for the New York brokerage firm Monness, Williams & Sidel. Two years later, the couple bought a house in Connecticut, which required many years of renovation. While working as a stock broker, Stewart renovated the house in Connecticut and turned it into a country house with a large garden with beehives, a chicken coop, and a goat pen. Other houses in the area were owned by various celebrities, including movie producers, writers and artists. Stewart met many people on the commuter trains and that gave her opportunities for her catering business. Stewart resigned her position as a stock broker and started a catering business called The Uncatered Affair with her friend, Norma Collier, in 1973. Growing up in a large family and organizing various parties since high school, she was accustomed to cooking for a large number of people. In the meantime, Andy became successful in publishing; one year, the couple hosted a banquet at their house in Connecticut. One of the guests liked the food catered by Stewart, and invited her to work for his magazine. Eventually, Stewart's business prospered and she established her first company, Martha Stewart, Inc. in 1977.

In 1982, Stewart published her first cookbook, *Entertaining*, which has pictures from her country garden house in Connecticut photographed by her husband. Traditionally, American cookbooks contained written recipes but not many pictures of the food itself. However, *Entertaining* published each recipe with glossy color pictures of the finished products. It also introduced innovative ideas for hosting small- to large-sized theme parties. Beyond these ideas, what separated *Entertaining* from other cookbooks was the fact that Stewart made all the food personally, using her own kitchen, and her house and her garden as the shooting studio. Being based on Stewart's personal lifestyle

at her Connecticut home made her book more authentic. It included step-by-step procedures for hors d'oeuvres, table settings, and flower arrangements. The book was a great success, promoting nontraditional and creative ways to host home parties. She continued publishing books, which eventually created a social phenomenon called „Martha Mania“. These people are a devoted group of fans who try to replicate the lifestyle Stewart promotes. Since *Entertaining* came out, Stewart has published more than seventy books, for total sales of 34.7 million dollars.<sup>6</sup>

In 1987, K-mart hired Stewart as a consultant for developing new products targeting baby boomers. During the same year, she bought a 150-year-old house in Westport, Connecticut, and K-mart invested 20 million dollars to help her renovate the house. In 1990, the premier issue of *MSL* magazine was published by Time Warner Inc. which sold 350,000 copies. Based on this success, she signed a ten-year contract with Time Warner, Inc. and *MSL* was started as a quarterly magazine in 1991. Stewart expanded her career each year in this multimedia business. In 1992, she appeared weekly on NBC's *Today* morning show and began hosting her own thirty-minute TV program in 1994. By 1995, *MSL* reached a circulation of 880,000 copies in the U.S. and Canada. She had built enough confidence to set out on her own and established Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, LLC. (MSLO) in 1997 after becoming independent from Time Warner, Inc.. During the same year, she introduced her product line called Martha Stewart Everyday through K-mart. It started with a bed, bath and paint collection but later expanded to include dishes and kitchen ware. At this point, MSLO was making a profit of \$20 million to \$25 million a year, and in 1999, the company's stock started trading on the New York

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<sup>6</sup> Based on MSLO annual reports <http://phx.corporate-ir.net/phoenix.zhtml?c=96022&p=irol-newsArticle&ID=1667853&highlight=>.

Stock Exchange. In spite of her conviction for insider trading with a 5-month prison sentence in 2004, resulting in her being prohibited from operating her publicly traded business for five years, MSLO still launched new magazines and TV and radio programs. With Stewart barred from MSLO business operations, she focused on the creative side of the business, publishing new books and hosting TV and radio shows. In the same time frame, MSLO signed contracts with numerous companies and expanded the Martha Stewart line to include furniture, lighting, kitchen items, crafts products, rugs, carpet tiles, and food products, e.g., holiday hams. In 2008, MSLO purchased the Emeril Lagasse franchise and collaborated with online-based companies such as 1800flowers.com to produce unique products such as stationeries and flower arrangements creatively supervised by Martha Stewart. In 2009, the number of followers on Stewart's Twitter account hit the one-million mark. In spite of more than thirty years in the media and her felony conviction, Martha Stewart's popularity has not seemed to fade.

#### Historical Background and Idealized Image of Women in *MSL*

Until the 1960s, many married American women stayed home doing housework, childrearing and supporting husbands as homemakers. However, as the women's social movement made progress, women sought more opportunities outside their homes. Many feminists viewed spending more time on housework as degrading to women's position in society, and that housework should be shared. Therefore, when *MSL* was published in 1990 and promoted housework as a way to a better lifestyle, many feminists thought "*Martha Stewart Living* seems to bring women back into some kind of 1950s suburban nightmare" (Leavitt 203). In spite of such criticisms, *MSL* was well-received by the

public because Stewart demonstrated housekeeping tasks as activities through which women could express themselves while maintaining a beautiful living environment. Until then, the public view was that homemakers handled housekeeping tasks as daunting labor that they were obligated to do for their families.

In the mid 1970s, many women were working outside their homes and more people were spending less time on cooking and other housekeeping tasks. Many working men and women purchased ready-made food for dinner from people like Stewart, who owned a catering business and a small deli in Westport, Connecticut (Price 46). By the 1990s, women's social status greatly improved, but at the same time, many women were spending less time taking care of their homes or cooking. In 2009, *The New York Times* reported that

Women working outside the home; food companies persuading Americans to let them do the cooking; and advances in technology that made it easier for them to do so. Cooking is no longer obligatory....Today, the average American spends a mere 27 minutes a day on food preparation (another four minutes cleaning up); that's less than half the time that we spent cooking and cleaning up when Julia [Child] arrived on our television screens [in 1963] (Pollan).

More varieties of frozen food, an explosion of fast food choices and microwave ovens also contributed to diminishing time spent on home cooking.

A high divorce rate is another reason why Americans spent less time on cooking and housekeeping tasks. By the end of the 1970s, the divorce rate in American society had increased 69% since the 1960s, and about 40% of children born in the 1960s were raised in a single-parent household at some point in their lives. In the 1980s, the divorce rate in the U.S. increased from one in three couples in the 70s to one in two couples (Price xix). Both women's independence and the high divorce rate led to reduced



engagement in cooking and housekeeping tasks because people often spend less time on housekeeping tasks when they live alone or are a single-parent working full-time.

Economics compelled more women to bear the double burden of productive and domestic labor, reducing the amount of time they could spend on the latter. Connor and Downey reported in 1996 that American high school students' enrollment in home economics courses declined 23% in the first half of 1990s, and their mothers' performance of basic domestic work such as cooking and cleaning were even lower than these students' (quoted in C.J. Smith 671). By contrast, *MSL* showed an image of a beautiful household with good food where women could enjoy housekeeping tasks. In a society of high divorce rate and less homemade food, *MSL* produces an idealized image of a homemaker who is independent through self-sufficiency rather than a symbol of a caring and supportive „wife“ and „mother“ for the family. The ideal homemaker can view housekeeping as a set of activities in which she can express herself rather than as obligations she must fulfill, and Stewart presents such an ideal homemaker through her magazines, books and other forms of mass media.

In the following sections, I am going to investigate how Stewart creates and promotes an idealized image of the homemaker by citing evidence and examples from *MSL* published in 1997. I chose this particular year because Stewart became independent from Time Warner, Inc. then and established MSLO. I believe these events influenced *MSL*'s contents and the direction *MSL* took until today.

### A Perfect Teacher Promotes Independence among Homemakers

When *MSL* was first published, many critics blamed Stewart for promoting an idea of domesticity that took women back to the 1950s. However, many women who were divorced or were single mothers needed the skills typically handled by men such as restoring furniture, fixing plumbing problems, and maintaining and fixing garden tools. Many domestic advisors such as Harriette Plunkett spent years teaching women these skills (Leavitt 199-200), but the purpose of giving advice was different from Stewart's. While domestic advisors in the past gave advice to women to maintain a healthier living environment for their families, Stewart teaches the same skill set to women to be able to handle their problems on their own. In her essay in *MSL*, Stewart writes that "Accomplishing a task, whether it is as simple as a minor household repair or as complicated as painting a decorative floor, gives us all a feeling of self-worth, satisfaction, reward, and independence." (*MSL* 50: 8). In *MSL*, housekeeping tasks are no longer viewed as a necessity or even less so as a drudgery, but as an important part of a fully developed personality.

For example, the October 1997 issue introduces how to clean rain gutters and to build a better drainage system. However, the demonstration of cleaning the rain gutters is done by men and not by women. Likewise, how-to guides in *MSL* for the skills typically handled by men are often demonstrated by male models [Figure 1]. Using male models creates the impression that the tasks introduced in the magazine seem to be more difficult and labor intensive. However, *MSL* provides an impression that if they follow the instructions published in *MSL*, even women can handle tasks often done by men or professionals. The instructions are explained thoroughly and in detail so that the projects



Figure 1. Male model is demonstrating cleaning gutters in *MSL*

introduced in the magazine look easy to complete. By completing a task according to the instructions in *MSL*, women can feel satisfaction and gain confidence from not relying on others to handle the task. While *MSL* functions as a textbook for homemakers, Stewart takes on the teacher's role.

Like many domestic advisors in the past, Stewart does consider herself a teacher. Teachers are professionals who convey information and facts to pupils, while mothers are not professionals but can pass down information along with their family history to their children. Unlike other domestic advisors, Stewart lacks the image of a mother who supports her husband and her family. In her first cookbook, *Entertaining*, and many others published in the 1980s and the early 1990s, she discussed family and family traditions. However, she rarely writes about how she tried to create a living environment where her family can get together, or how she supported her husband and daughter as a wife and the mother. The „Remembering“ column at the end of *MSL* was where Stewart shared memories of her family and the best practices for housekeeping rather than those of her husband and daughter. As a matter of fact, Stewart acknowledges herself as a

teacher rather than a mother. In her interview with *New York* magazine in 1995, she said “I’m less mother than teacher. Hardly anybody I know thinks of me as a mother.

Everybody loves their mothers, but not everybody likes their teachers. Teachers can be too hard on them. The love-hate stuff comes because of the teaching” (Lippert 28). By creating an image of a domestic advisor whom the readers can rely on and have their questions answered by reading the magazine, *MSL* became a resource magazine for American women who have fewer domestic skills. Simultaneously, by labeling herself a teacher, Stewart distinguishes herself from her readers by creating a hierarchical relationship.

In the February 1997 issue of *MSL* (published in January 1997), there was a column called the „Letters to the Editor“ section at the beginning of the magazine, which included criticisms and comments about topics from past issues. Many of them were positive and appreciative of the information *MSL* provided, but in the Dec.1996/Jan. 1997 issue<sup>7</sup>, there were some readers rejecting the featured topics of previous issues and pointing out Stewart’s poor word choice in an essay in the previous issue. From the February 1997 issue onward, Stewart changed „Letters to the Editor” to a Q &A format titled „Ask Martha.” This section provided space for readers to ask questions about gardening, decorating, cooking, and other housekeeping tasks.<sup>8</sup> Stewart responded to each question thoroughly so that her advice was usually five or six times longer than the question. In the February issue, the section only had one page, but it was expanded to two to three pages after Stewart’s departure from Time Warner. At a glance, this change seems to be in line with Stewart’s core beliefs about, “connecting with customers is a

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<sup>7</sup> *MSL* is published December and January issues as one in November 1996.

<sup>8</sup> Stewart’s official homepage was not available until September 1997.

mindset” (Stewart 78). However, in reality this change benefits Stewart more than her readers. First, „Ask Martha” functions to strengthen Stewart’s image as a knowledgeable domestic advisor. Stewart is known as a perfectionist, and often uses the word „perfect” to mean „best of all” in magazine articles and the names of recipes such as the „Perfect” Thanksgiving Turkey. In order to introduce what Stewart believes is a „perfect” way of doing housekeeping tasks and cooking, it is imperative for Stewart to promote herself as a „perfect” person. Second, Stewart also creates a hierarchy between the readers and herself by having her readers ask questions of her. Every reader’s question entreats Stewart for advice by stating, “I would like your advice on ...” or “How can I do ...?” The student-to-teacher form is clear. Stewart also demonstrates some activities as a role model in her TV show. Both in the magazine and on TV show, she always presents herself as the knowledgeable authority, and shows confidence in whatever she does.

### Housekeeping Tasks as Personal Expression

Many domestic advisers in the early twentieth century added more meaning to housekeeping tasks than their being a women’s job. However, what they emphasized was that housekeeping is a way to maintain a family’s well-being, and working for their family is the highest priority and the most important responsibility for homemakers (Leavitt 174-5). It was homemaker’s responsibility to clean the house and create a comfortable living environment for all family members. Homemakers were encouraged to consider housekeeping as a „professional job” which means they are specialists of housekeeping and to have determination to handle each task for their family’s sake (Kittredge quoted in Leavitt 79). Conversely, *MSL* changes housekeeping tasks from

“something readers have to do” to “something readers can enjoy.” Stewart often uses the word „enjoy“ in her books and *MSL*, and those materials suggest that readers can experience the „enjoyment“ she describes by performing „Martha Stewart“ activities and turn housekeeping tasks into ways to express their creativity through food, entertaining, crafts, gardening, etc. However, many projects are in fact difficult to accomplish because they are time consuming and complicated. In order to „enjoy“ what Stewart suggests, one needs to have considerable financial resources and time.

Every issue of *MSL* has at least one „entertaining“ article on topics ranging from how to host theme parties to arranging a table setting. Stewarts writes “Entertaining is...an opportunity to be individualistic, to express your own ideas about what constitutes a good party” (*Entertaining* 12). Whether the party is for one’s husband or children or a broader group, hosting a party is an opportunity to show off one’s creativity, skills, and organizational ability as a homemaker.

In *MSL*, everything looks perfect - the location of the party, the decorations, and most importantly, the food. The September 1997 issue’s special topic is the „Three Generation Birthday Party“ which celebrates the first birthday of a one-year old boy and his grandmother’s birthday. The article suggests combining two birthdays together to make an ordinary birthday party better; baking two cakes instead of one and inviting twice as many guests. Although the number of guests invited to this particular party was ten, the menu included eleven different items, from drinks to desserts; everything was made from scratch including mini-hamburger buns. I argue that this „do-it-yourself“ spirit promoted throughout *MSL* helps women gain skills and control over housekeeping tasks in their own households. Wajda points out,

„Do-it-yourself“ connotes a purchase on privacy, on work-as-leisure activities spent within or around the home, the rewards reified in tasteful furnishings, perfectly orchestrated family rituals, and thoughtful, handmade gifts (78).

The control and ownership that homemakers develop through do-it-yourself projects make housekeeping tasks more meaningful. Completing a project successfully would give the homemaker the confidence to try harder tasks and develop a forward-looking attitude. It is *MSL* that assists these readers and gives more meaning to „do-it-yourself“ projects by providing more sophisticated images in its „how-to“ instructions. In the case of cleaning rain gutters in the October 1997 issue, *MSL* does not just provide information on how to clean the gutters. The article starts with an Oscar Wilde quote, “We’re all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at stars” (*MSL* 53:158), and it also briefly mentions the concept of harmony in Japanese culture upon introducing various patterns of gutter layouts. While many domestic advice books simply provide practical advice, *MSL* helps readers recognize the aesthetics of housekeeping. I think aesthetics in this context has two meanings. The first is to produce professional quality results, or a store-bought appearance in one’s housekeeping tasks or do-it-yourself projects. Another meaning is to handle housekeeping tasks as a form of art.<sup>9</sup> Stewart writes that promoting housekeeping tasks as an art form made her unique as a domestic advisor; “Raising the notion of homemaking to an art rather than treating it as a chore, made me different and interesting and worth covering for the press” (Stewart 98). *MSL* not only teaches how to paint a living room wall but also teaches total color coordination with the furniture, walls in

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<sup>9</sup> I believe that *MSL* is strongly influenced by WASP and New England cultures in many ways such as home furnishing and décor, cooking and gardening. However, based on my observation of *MSL* in 1997 and more recent issues, *MSL* is not completely based on these cultures. At the same time, *MSL* consistently discusses total coordination of home furnishings, decoration and cooking for various events. I think this total coordination creates aesthetic found in *MSL*.

other rooms, flooring, and lighting. Besides suggesting how to produce professional looking results, *MSL* displays a living environment only found in a model show room.

Such aesthetics of housekeeping shown in *MSL* ignores the fact that many readers of the magazine live with their families, and many of them have pets, children, or both. Some issues of *MSL* in 1997 introduced crafts that can be produced by or with children, but many of them are either too time consuming or too complicated for children.<sup>10</sup> Housekeeping instructions in *MSL* do not provide information for readers with families, pets and small children. For example, the September 1997 issue's „Housekeeping“ column introduces alternative floor materials such as bamboo, cork, leather, etc. While the column gives the characteristics and suitable settings for each material, price and handling, it never mentions which material is best for those who have small children or a large family to consider in selecting the right floor material. Instead, it gives examples of suitable rooms as general information, such as “[l]eather, lovely in a library, is impractical in a foyer, where it will get dirty and scuffed” (*MSL* 52:120). When it comes down to expressing oneself through housekeeping, the selection of certain materials (in this case flooring) is mainly based on personal taste, not what is suitable for one's family. Most homemakers need to consider practicality, affordability, or technicality when they work on housekeeping tasks and remodeling their houses, but that is not the priority in *MSL*. That is because Stewart has plenty of resources and does not mention having family members who make a mess.

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<sup>10</sup> MSLO published a pocket-size magazine called *Kids: Fun Stuff To Do Together* featuring various crafts and activities children can do with their parents from 2002-2006.



A Successful Business Woman Defines American Culture<sup>11</sup>

*MSL* was first published by Time Warner in 1990. By then, Stewart had published *Entertaining*, and several other books while she owned her catering business in Westport, Connecticut. She also became a consultant for the K-mart home products division. Her business was successful, but Stewart was looking for better opportunities to organize and expand her business, and came up with the idea of publishing a personalized magazine under her name. Stewart writes in her book that she was confident that she would succeed because she felt a strong need from many women for such a magazine and approached Time Warner to publish her personalized magazine, *MSL*. However, women's magazines, especially housekeeping and cooking magazines, were not selling well in the 1980s, and Time Warner did not show any interest in publishing. Stewart visited Time Warner again after she was rejected by another publisher and this time, Time Warner reluctantly agreed to publish a pilot version. To everyone's surprise, the magazine was well-received by consumers. In June 1991, Stewart entered a ten-year contract with the publisher, renewed it in 1995, then bought her magazine and became independent from Time Warner in 1997. I interpret this change to mean that she wanted to take this opportunity to gain more personal control of the business with these two companies by establishing her own company MSLO. Most importantly, she also established an equal status with Time Warner as a business partner rather than as an employee. When she signed contracts with K-mart in 1987 and Time Warner in 1991, she was „hired“ by them as a consultant or an editor: she was unable to make the final decisions for her own products and magazine. Stewart also wanted to approach women more holistically, so readers could try recipes

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<sup>11</sup> Information of this section is from Price pp. 65-68 and Stewart p. 98.

from *MSL* by watching Stewart's demonstrations on her TV show with Martha Stewart brand products being sold at K-mart. Therefore, it was necessary for Stewart to consolidate and control all the businesses she was involved with (the TV show and syndicated radio program, her product line sold through K-mart, and other business contracts as well as publishing magazines and books). This would allow her to control everything she did and make more profit, which in turn could be used for developing new products and improving her magazines.<sup>12</sup> Stewart wrote in „A Letter From Martha“ in the April 1997 issue,

I felt the need to integrate my efforts under one roof so that we can be the most effective and information-centered company in media. We needed to be free in order to follow our dreams into new areas of endeavor...I can break with traditional „cubbyholing“ methods of doing business and bring our standards forward in new and different ways (*MSL* 48: 12).

It was a moment when Stewart declared her independence and built the foundations of a multi-million-dollar business in a world predominantly operated by men. There had been many domestic advisors in the past, who had promoted domestic advice to women in the U.S., but no one had made domestic advice into a multi-million-dollar business.

Although the way that Stewart approaches her readers is different from domestic advisors in the past, she still follows in their footsteps. Leavitt argues that domestic advisors have long been promoting a fantasy world through domestic advice; “The writings of domestic advisors demonstrate cultural ideals, not cultural realities....Domestic-advice manuals have always been the stuff of fantasy” (5).

Consumers who are inspired by Stewart not only look for advice on perfect ways of handling housekeeping tasks, but also purchase Stewart's products. By doing so, they try

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<sup>12</sup> For more information about Stewart's establishment of her business and how she was described in American media, refer to Price pp. 64-68.

to fill the gap between what is shown in the magazine and their own lives. Because of Stewart's outstanding success in the business world, her image as a business woman is unavoidable. However, she must maintain her image as a homemaker in order to continue expanding her business and approach her readers as a fellow homemaker. At the same time, just maintaining her image as a homemaker is not enough. It is crucial for her to produce an image of the „perfect“ homemaker and become a role model for many women to achieve the New England WASP culture which she promotes as mainstream culture in the U.S.

In spite of her Polish background, she portrays herself as a white, middle-class homemaker. After her divorce, she kept promoting the same image but also portrays herself as a teacher and a successful business woman in *MSL*. Stewart often shares memories of her family in her cook books and the „Remembering“ columns in *MSL*. However, compared to the number of times Stewart introduces common American foods such as casserole, BBQ, and pies, she rarely introduces traditional Polish food such as pirozhkies in her TV shows and magazines.<sup>13</sup> The WASP population has been the main target audience for Stewart for a long time so Stewart maintains her image as a member of the WASP population. Therefore, instead of introducing culturally diverse recipes in the cookbooks she focuses more in celebrating WASP traditions.<sup>14</sup>

Since the publication of her first cookbook in 1982, Stewart has established her image as a white middle class homemaker introducing recipes, seasonal events, and

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<sup>13</sup> No pirozhki recipe shows up in her website search.

<sup>14</sup> Martha Stewart Roundtable, *American Studies*, 42:2. 2001. 67-138.

specific ways of decorating houses that are heavily influenced by British style gardens<sup>15</sup> and American colonialism, especially in the New England region.<sup>16</sup> The demography of her *MSL* readership matches her image. Yvonne Moran reported in 1998 that 85% of the customers who use her mail order services hold a college degree, and own a house and have an average income of \$70,000.<sup>17</sup> They are in their forties and about 75% of them are married, and 75% of these married women hold a full-time job. This demography is similar to the one for the *MSL* readership (quoted in C.D. Smith 338). During the same year, Mason and Meyers conducted interviews with ten women who were fans of Martha Stewart. They were twenty-four to fifty-one years old, and nine were Caucasian and one was Asian (809-810). Although Mason and Meyers' sample is small, their demography matches the demographic information that Moran reported.<sup>18</sup> Stewart also acknowledges that traditionally, "families with children, young professionals, students, and men who want a healthy and satisfying meal that is easy to shop for and easy to prepare" have not been targeted in *MSL* (80). *MSL* has focused on introducing seasonal events, recipes using ingredients its target audience is familiar with, and room decorating ideas inspired by the pioneer era that also have influenced many American households. Bentley points out that the food and seasonal events Stewart introduces in her books and magazines represent

"whiteness with a high-church, White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) and *Martha Stewart Living* unlike other women's magazines, rarely

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<sup>15</sup> Matthew Gantert Hyland looks at the Martha Stewart phenomenon from the stand point of her gardening advice in his article, "Martha Stewart's Living Landscapes." *American Studies*, 42:2. 2001. 101-112.

<sup>16</sup> Sarah A. Leavitt discusses this point in her article, "It Was Always a Good Thing: historical Precedents for Martha Stewart." *American Studies*, 42:2. 2001. 125-131.

<sup>17</sup> Back in the 1990s, *MSL* had a mailing order service called „Martha by Mail“ where readers could purchase Stewart's original kitchen tools and decoration kits.

<sup>18</sup> According to Mason and Meyers, interviewing a small number of women like them is not uncommon. For more information about how they conducted their interview, refer to their article.

features any food ritual or ethnic fare outside of mainstream America in general and New England in particular: Thanksgiving, Christmas, Fourth of July celebrations, church bake sales, Easter and the like are all regularly and prominently featured... When Martha Stewart publications do feature some ethnic fare, the entire process is glossed in a patina of whiteness” (90).

In fact, *MSL* rarely featured non-American meals until recently. In the May 1997 issue a famous Japanese chef, Nobu Matsuhisa, appears in the „Sushi 101“ article which includes typical Japanese foods Americans are familiar with. Matsuhisa also introduces other Japanese dishes but sophisticated photographs published in *MSL* make Japanese cooking more of an art than something the readers can try at home. Likewise, authentic Mexican, Japanese and other Asian food recipes are usually not found in *MSL*, and many recipes in *MSL* influenced by non-American cultures are arranged to suit American taste buds as Bentley points out. For example, in the October 2005 issue under the „Fit to eat“ section, there is a recipe called, „Shiitake Nori Rolls“, in which buckwheat noodles with vegetables and herbs are wrapped in a sheet of dried seaweed called Nori. It looks good and healthy in the picture, but the combination of buckwheat noodles, lime juice and cilantro may sound too creative to Japanese people.<sup>19</sup>

*MSL* also promotes WASP culture as a way to get American families together by reinforcing typical American seasonal events. *MSL* not only introduced various methods for cooking, gardening and decorating one’s home, but it also educated the readers about the histories of the most common seasonal events such as Easter, Fourth of July, Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas, and the cultural significances attached to these

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<sup>19</sup> Nobu Matsuhisa is from and trained as sushi chef in Japan. Before he opened his first restaurant in Beverly Hills, CA, he worked in Peru and Argentina. His cooking is influenced by South American and American cuisines. He co-owns thirteen restaurants with Robert de Niro all over the world. Martha Stewart wrote the introduction to Matsuhisa’s first cookbook, *Nobu: The Cookbook* published in 2001. For more information about Matsuhisa, visit his website <http://www.nobumatsuhisa.com/>.

events. Beside these histories and cultures, Stewart introduced special meals „suitable“ for these events which convey the importance of hearty home cooked meals and the values of family gatherings and sharing meals that have been de-emphasized in many American households since more women started to hold full-time employment. Stewart once wrote in *MSL* that “[o]ur goal is to teach, to inform, and to inspire all of you in the preservation and extension of traditional family values and activities” (MSL 48: 12). *MSL* has taught its readers how to bring people together and become connected by suggesting an environment where many readers aspire to live. As a reflection of this philosophy, *MSL* does not have a strong notion of Christian practice when it provides „how-to“ advice for Christmas and Easter-like domestic advice in the early 1900s. The December 1997 /January 1998 issue<sup>20</sup> covers how to wrap presents, make homemade Christmas wreathes, roast chicken and bake ginger bread, but the Christian cross or the Jewish Star of David is rarely featured in the magazine.<sup>21</sup> *MSL* treats the WASP culture as if it is the mainstream culture in the U.S., and a way to recognize the tradition and distinctive quality of American culture.

### The Ideal Homemaker in a Fantasy World

Back in the 1960s, many American women were inspired by Julia Child and tried Boeuf Bourguignon and other recipes from *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. Boeuf Bourguignon is actually not an easy and quick recipe to make, but many women were inspired by watching Julia Child cooking on TV and dreamed of cooking it for their

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<sup>20</sup> *MSL* was published December and January issues as one in Nov. 1997.

<sup>21</sup> *MSL* occasionally introduces the Jewish menorah as a Christmas decoration and some Jewish Star of David crafts are introduced in *MSL*.

families (Pollan).<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Stewart's recipes sometimes look too complicated or too time consuming to cook at first, and many women today do not have time to cook prime rib for six hours or cannot afford to buy a goose for dinner. However, if readers want to make a roasted chicken, they can look up an issue of *MSL* and follow the instructions with pictures. It is often the case that small tips and simple techniques make a significant difference even for a simple dish like an omelet. The „Cooking“ section of *MSL* features meals requiring skills ranging from basic to advanced. It teaches readers tips and techniques to make their finished products have a restaurant quality appearance and taste. In case readers need to refer to the instructions during a project, the paper used for the magazine is resistant to damage. Step by step instructions and key techniques are explained with pictures making difficult recipes look easy to try. Such visualization supplements the how-to instructions in *MSL*. Even today, many American cookbooks do not have pictures of finished meals for each recipe they publish.<sup>23</sup> When a reader is not an experienced cook, it is hard to imagine a finished product simply by reading a recipe, but pictures of finished meals such as prime rib, goose, chicken, omelet, jam, and pizza inspire many *MSL* readers to try the recipe regardless of their cooking skills.

*MSL* also offers other skills for tasks typically handled by women such as cooking, gardening, making crafts and decorating rooms. Based on the amount of information *MSL* offers, it is more like a handbook of housekeeping than a women's magazine. Handbooks often carry basic information anyone can refer to if they have questions. *MSL* teaches basic knowledge and provides thorough instructions on many housekeeping tasks and the

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<sup>22</sup> Stewart made every single recipe in Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* (Stewart 13). Julie Powell, a woman from New York also developed a blog (<http://juliepowellbooks.com/blog.html>) and kept a record of her production of each recipe from the book. Her blog was made into a film titled *Julie & Julia* in 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Almost all Japanese cookbooks and magazines have step-by-step instructions with pictures.

application of these skills to its readers. „Sewing 101“ published in the February 1997 issue introduces basic tools and materials one should have and basic skills one should know. The article has pictures of actual tools and materials, and detailed drawings for instructions. The article acknowledges the feeling of inadequacy many readers have about sewing and encourages them to try. The introduction of the article reads “To those who have the dry cleaner replace every lost button and tack every loose hem, the world of sewing can be intimidating. But a little knowledge can turn someone who doesn’t sew into someone who does” (*MSL* 46: 62). As the title indicates, it is so basic that anybody is supposed to be able to sew after reading this article. The two-part article about hand sewing and using sewing machine starts with an explanation of the usage of each sewing tool followed by basic stitches and how to sew buttons. The second half of the article introduces a sewing machine (with a picture), names of machine parts, and how to sew a hem as a basic skill. Finally, it has instructions on how to sew pillow covers and cloth napkins as „first projects“. These step-by-step instructions with assignments of the first project give different levels of accomplishment for readers. If readers want to try basic hand sewing skills, they can just try sewing a button. If readers want to learn more advanced sewing skills using a sewing machine, they can follow the instructions in the magazine. Others who already have a basic knowledge of sewing may read the article as a refresher or look for a simple project they do like make pillow cases, using a sewing machine. *MSL* as a handbook meets readers’ needs at different skill levels and help develops confidence in sewing through this article.

At the same time, *MSL* often suggests that its readers seek professional help when it is appropriate. At a glance, such instructions give the impression that readers should



know their limits and their safety is the main priority more than being able to „do-it-yourself“. Even if readers start a project following the instructions in *MSL*, they might realize that it is not realistic to achieve the same results as shown in the magazine (because many projects require special equipment, ingredients or materials) calling a professional is often offered as a solution.

After all, these products are for the middle and upper classes. For example, a French press coffee pot shown in the „Good Things“ section costs \$87.50. The ribbons used on the front cover are from a specialty store in Manhattan in New York. Under the „Guide“ section of *MSL*, detailed information about all the materials used in the magazine, names of stores, contact information, and prices for each item are published. Stewart defines her most frequently used quote, „Good Things“, as “simple, practical solutions or tips that make everyday activities easier” (9). These products introduced in *MSL* may make one’s life more enjoyable or make housekeeping tasks easier, but they are only available from stores in New York City or on the East coast. They are not only expensive but very difficult to purchase since in-store shopping or mail order were the most common ways to shop until recently. Readers can also purchase Martha Stewart original brand items through „Martha by Mail“ listed at the end of the magazine. These products are high quality and expensive; for example, a two-piece large copper cookie cutter costs \$45.

In reality, most readers cannot afford to follow the lifestyle *MSL* promotes, such as making everything from scratch, fixing most household problems on your own or cultivating an unrealistically large garden. For many readers, *MSL* is a handbook of how to be Martha Stewart and how to live like her in a fantasy world that she creates in the

magazine. It starts with „Martha“s Calendar“ which lists Stewart“s monthly schedule. It lists mainly reminders such as “Shred fallen leaves and add to compost pile” (*MSL* 53:10) and Stewart“s appearance schedules for morning shows on TV. However, the calendar does not reflect any of her extremely busy business schedules, with actual meetings and trips. It creates an impression that Stewart“s life is not as hectic as others who are trying to make ends meet. Readers can still dream about living in the world illustrated in *MSL*, but just following Stewart“s advice is not enough. Mechling argues that “[Stewart“s] advice is aimed at helping readers and viewers “perform” a white, middle-class gentility through the careful arrangements of the commodities --- the props, sets, and costumes --- essential to that performance” (68). In order to live the life of *MSL*, it is crucial for readers to purchase Martha Stewart products or the products featured in the magazine. But by completing crafts, recipes and projects published in the magazine using the equipment *MSL* recommends, readers can pretend to be Martha Stewart.

For many consumers, they can enter this fantasy world through *MSL*. While it provides practical how-to advice, it also promotes a high-end lifestyle through cooking, decorating, and gardening. The upscale image the magazine tries to present is reflected in the quality of the paper and the design. Compared to other magazines, *MSL*“s cover is thicker and stronger. It also has more diverse topics than other domestic advice magazines such as *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Cooking Light*. These magazines are based on topics, so that the picture on each issue reflects a theme such as room décor and food. *MSL*, readers need to pick up the magazine in order to know the features in each issue because the magazine cover does not have a consistent image like other domestic advice magazines.

In addition, *MSL* creates a more sophisticated image by using pictures to deliver its contents instead of using words, as other domestic advice magazines do. The contents are often located right under Stewart's name in one color with a consistent font. Occasionally, it has two different fonts, but it gives it an elegant look by using a thin Italic font. However, 75% of the front covers of other domestic advice magazines are often covered by busy descriptions of the magazine contents in different colors [Figure 2]. *MSL*'s sophisticated images not only arouse readers' interest in the magazine, but also create an air of sophistication surrounding all of its advice. Stewart's image on her products also reinforces her image as the perfect homemaker shown in the magazine and on her TV program. By purchasing the equipment and tools that Stewart recommends, readers feel as if they can perform housekeeping tasks better.

### Stewart Demonstrates the Ideal Image of a Homemaker

Leavitt points out that Stewart is not the first person to create a fantasy world through domestic advice (5). However, what separates Stewart from other domestic advisors in the past is that she not only gives how-to advice but also provides lists of



Figure 2. *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Martha Stewart Living* in 1997

actual materials to create the fantasy among her readers. On the one hand, she encourages readers to be self-sufficient and gain independence and confidence through these projects. On the other hand, Stewart provides everything her readers need from how-to advice to actual equipment in order to complete the projects that she introduces in *MSL*. As Stewart expected, many homemakers were inspired by her and use *MSL* as a handbook to create the environment that *MSL* suggests, and live „like“ Martha Stewart. However, the self-sufficiency and independence they believe they have established is prescribed by Stewart.

Stewart has influenced many homemakers' lives by providing a how-to guide and teaching domestic skills through magazines, and selling products that aid their projects. Many homemakers including a group called „Martha mania“ look up to Stewart as a role model and follow her lifestyle. Many of them have found housekeeping tasks to be fun activities as Stewart suggested. At the same time, Stewart knows that she is the only one who can make the fantasy world she creates into a reality. What appears in *MSL* is only available to Stewart as she said in her interview, “I am first and foremost a housewife with a home, with a garden, with everything that everybody wants” (Pogrebin). Most homemakers live in different situations than Stewart: those in a lower social class with more limited resources than Stewart can only dream of living in the fantasy world that Stewart creates. Stewart's privileged statement, “Why not take good messages [through her products sold at K-mart] to less fortunate people?” (Pogrebin) reflects her belief. It is her mission to continue creating a world of fantasy for her readers by not only publishing cookbooks and magazines, but also by selling products that help readers create a fantasy world in their own living environment. In reality, the physical and emotional independence Stewart promotes through *MSL* can be pursued only by Stewart herself.

She cannot manipulate her readers into creating the same lifestyle she has even if she wanted to. However, what she can do is try to control each reader's life through *MSL* and by selling her products. At the same time, coming from the modest background of a working-class Polish immigrant family, she also tries to live the ideal lifestyle based on the WASP culture she advocates. By doing so, she presents herself as a WASP homemaker.

## CHAPTER 3

### HARUMI KURIHARA

#### A Charismatic Homemaker in Japan<sup>24</sup>

Harumi Kurihara was born in 1947 in Shimoda, a coastal town in Shizuoka Prefecture in Japan. Her family owned a printing shop, which her father took over when he married Kurihara's mother. Kurihara was raised in a traditional Japanese household where no Western furniture was found and no western meal was served. While her father operated the shop, her mother cooked meals for her family and their employees three to four times a day. When Kurihara was a teenager, both her grandmother and aunt who lived with the Kuriharas became bedridden from illnesses. Kurihara volunteered to take care of them by feeding, bathing, and attending to their personal needs until they passed away. After graduating from high school, she went to a junior college in Tokyo. Although she lived away from her parents, almost all her financial needs were taken care of by her parents.

Traditionally, many young Japanese women stay at home to learn *hanayome shugyō* (花嫁修業), a kind of apprenticeship to be a „good wife and wise mother“. They learn the best practices of housekeeping tasks such as ironing, cooking, cleaning, taking care of various household rituals passed down through the generations, and social

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<sup>24</sup> Information of this section is from Kibayashi, and other sources as indicated in the context.

manners from their mothers. Kurihara moved back to her parents' house after graduating from junior college and helped her mother while being an apprentice to be an ideal bride. When she was twenty-one years old, Kurihara met Reiji Kurihara, a television personality at one of the largest TV networks in Japan. Reiji and his friends frequently visited Kurihara's brother, and Kurihara was sometimes invited to spend time with them. In her books and in many interviews, Kurihara stated that Reiji and her mother are the most influential people in her life. She shared how Reiji impressed her by cooking and serving a full western meal for her when she first visited his house. In spite of their fourteen-year age difference, Reiji's divorce history, and her parents' disapproval, Kurihara was married to Reiji when she was twenty-six years old. Soon she gave birth to two children, a daughter and a son, who are now following in their mother's footsteps as *ryōri kenkyū ka* (料理研究家).<sup>25</sup>

Kurihara reported in her interviews that she was happy to be a stay-at-home mom, but she also felt a vague sense of uncertainty about her future (Sunomama 33). On one occasion, Reiji said to Kurihara that he didn't want her to be a woman just waiting for him to come home every day.<sup>26</sup> Because Kurihara's mother taught her to be a devoted wife for her husband, she said, she was confused and felt lost when Reiji suggested she find some other purpose in her life. However, she started to teach a cooking class for the wives in her neighborhood, and later earned a backstage assistant job for a TV cooking show in 1983. Kurihara was thirty-six years old, and it was her first employment. After

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<sup>25</sup> The literal meaning of this title is a person who experiments and studies cooking. There are many *ryōri kenkyū ka* in Japan but many of them are woman who are good at cooking and develop recipes for magazines or publish their own cookbooks. I define a *ryōri kenkyū ka* in this context, as a woman who is a homemaker but has also established herself as a „celebrity homemaker“, Kurihara being the most famous.

<sup>26</sup> *Fujinkōron* 87:33, *Shūkan Bunshun* 47: 161, and Kibayashi 62.

working in this position for three years, she started to publish recipes in various cooking magazines. In 1989, she published her first cookbook *Kondate ga jūbai ni naru tare no hon* (献立が 10 倍になるたれの本 or *A Book of Various Kinds of Sauces to Enjoy Your Dish in 10 Versions*<sup>27</sup>) which sold 230,000 copies followed by her most successful cookbook, *Gochisōsama ga kikitakute* (ごちそうさまがききたくて or *I Want to Hear You Say: 'That was Delicious!'*<sup>28</sup>) in 1992, which has sold a total of 820,000 copies since then. What made her cookbooks unique was that she used her own kitchen as her studio and used her own collection of utensils and dishware. Especially in *Gochisōsama ga kikitakute*, she wrote narratives that went along with each recipe she introduced in the book. The following year, she started a company called *Yutori no Kūkan* (ゆとりの空間, A Space of Relax<sup>29</sup>) offering lessons in cooking and table arrangements, and later started a line of cookware due to high demand from the readers (*Shūkan Bunshun* 161). In 1996, Kurihara published the first issue of a seasonal magazine, *Suteki reshipi* (すてきレシピ or Nice Recipe)<sup>30</sup> which became the most popular cooking magazine in Japan. On its tenth anniversary, the magazine was published under a new name, *haru\_mi*.

In 2005, Kurihara's first English cookbook, *Harumi's Japanese Cooking* was awarded as the best cookbook in the World Asian Cuisine Book 2004 and the Best Cookbook of 2004 in the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards. The book is translated into many languages and has been published all over the world. By 2009, Kurihara's

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<sup>27</sup> English translation of the book title is written as it appears in this article, which is directly adopted from Kurihara's official website, [http://www.yutori.co.jp/en/about\\_harumi/](http://www.yutori.co.jp/en/about_harumi/)

<sup>28</sup> English translation of the book title is written as it appears in this article, which is directly adopted from Kurihara's official website, [http://www.yutori.co.jp/en/about\\_harumi/](http://www.yutori.co.jp/en/about_harumi/)

<sup>29</sup> English translation of the company's name is written as it appears in this article, which is directly adopted from Kurihara's official website, [http://www.yutori.co.jp/en/about\\_harumi/](http://www.yutori.co.jp/en/about_harumi/)

<sup>30</sup> English translation of the magazine title is written as it appears in this article which is directly adopted from Kurihara's official website, [http://www.yutori.co.jp/en/about\\_harumi/](http://www.yutori.co.jp/en/about_harumi/).



cookbooks and magazines have sold over 20 million copies in Japan and around the world (*haru\_mi* 12:130).

Currently, *Yutori no Kūkan* owns more than fifty stores that sell not only cookware, but also clothes, linen products, cooking seasonings and body lotions mainly designed by Kurihara herself, and made by potters and artists she selected from all over Japan. The readers of her magazine can order her products online, through her *haru\_mi* magazine or purchase them in stores in shopping malls and department stores. Moreover, they can eat Kurihara's dishes in more than fifteen restaurants, cafés or delis of most large cities in Japan.

Likewise, Kurihara successfully found a way to confirm her identity as a homemaker and distinguish herself from other *ryōri kenkyū ka*. Through her magazines, she shares her knowledge and skills as a homemaker: she approaches cooking from the arrangement of food that makes both food and dishes look attractive to her recipes developed from a homemaker's perspective and the ideas behind the development of recipes.

#### From *Suteki Reshipi* to *Haru\_mi*

After the successful publication of her first cookbook in 1996, Kurihara was invited to publish a magazine targeting middle-aged women, mainly homemakers. She developed a new quarterly lifestyle magazine called *Harumi Kurihara's Suteki reshipi* (hereafter *Suteki reshipi*). Kurihara asserted in many interviews in the 1990s and the early 2000s how little confidence she had when she started to work in publishing magazines (Omotenashi 23). However, readers found her advice helpful and useful, which turned

Kurihara's ideas of housekeeping tasks into business opportunities. Kurihara „shared“ her ideas through not only publishing her cooking recipes but also showing a holistic view of her life in general through magazines, TV programs and radio shows (Agawa 168).

She enjoyed publishing the magazine, but several years later the enjoyment of publishing magazines started to fade (Professional). During my interview, Nobuko Suzuki, the editor-in-chief for Kurihara's current magazine explained that Kurihara felt distressed about *Suteki reshipi*, especially during the last couple of years of publication. Kurihara was listed as a „supervisor“<sup>31</sup> in *Suteki reshipi* even though it was the editors who supervised Kurihara in creating recipes and developing ideas for articles. For example, Kurihara created various craft projects that she was not interested in making. In one issue when bead craft was a leading trend among middle-aged women, the editors introduced beading as if it were Kurihara's favorite craft of the moment. Kurihara was not actually a beader, so the editors found someone else to create the craft for her, and published it as Kurihara's handmade look.

The large number of recipes in every issue also caused the publication of the magazine under a new name. In a recent Japanese documentary program, *Professional: Shigoto no Ryūgi* (A Work in Professional Style), Kurihara said she realized that she was working like a machine and felt that she was not enjoying cooking any more. Each issue of *Suteki reshipi* contained too much information. In 150 pages, there were more than a hundred recipes, more than one article about handmade crafts such as bead crafts, knitting, embroidery and sewing, and two or three travel reports for both domestic and international destinations. Kurihara started to question the reason she was publishing the

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<sup>31</sup> „Supervisor“ was written in English in *Suteki reshipi*.

magazine and worried about the contents of a magazine that she did not have control over.<sup>32</sup>

In 2005, Kurihara finally broached the subject of leaving the publication, but her resignation was not accepted because the magazine had achieved unprecedented sales records. The more she was described as a „charismatic homemaker“ in the Japanese media, the more popular she became, and Kurihara’s popularity showed no signs of declining. In the end, the publisher suggested she renew the magazine with a new editorial team. They chose Suzuki, who was a close friend of Kurihara’s and member of the publisher’s executive board at the time, as editor in chief. In the fall of 2006, the new magazine, *haru\_mi*, made its debut.

### The Origin of “How-to” Magazines in Japan

In the 1970s, two magazines called *an ‘an* and *non-no* were published targeting teenage girls and young single women in Japan. Until then, fashion magazines only targeted middle-aged to older women or children. Therefore, teenage girls and young women saw themselves in the models who appeared in *an ‘an* and *non-no*. These two magazines were considered the pioneers of Japanese women’s lifestyle and fashion magazines; they continue to be pioneers today because they promote guidelines on how to establish their identities as young women. They helped women develop self-confidence and promoted independence among women in the 1970s through fashion, travel and room décor.

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<sup>32</sup> Based on my interview with Suzuki on May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011 and the documentary program, *Professional* on Oct. 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

Women were often not allowed to make life decisions by themselves in the 1970s. For example, they usually had to follow their parents' orders and lived under their supervision until they were married. In addition, many young women could not have their own room in their home due to a lack of space in the house (Sakamoto 266). Under such living conditions, young women looked for a way to escape from their parents' control, to simultaneously gain control in their own lives. Sakamoto argues that *an 'an* and *non-no* taught these young women a way to establish their own identities as women by choosing what clothes to wear, where to travel, and how to decorate their own bedrooms (if they had a bedroom) using the magazines as their guidebooks (265). These magazines' „Travel“ sections suggested that young women visit sightseeing spots to encourage them to have courage to go outside of their parents' protection and to „discover“ who they were. They also could secure their „own“ living space by turning their bedrooms into the spaces described in the magazine. Key words such as „self“, „discover“ and „adventure“ appeared throughout the magazines and created a fantasy among young women, communicating the message, “I will obtain what I want for myself in my own way” (Sakamoto 264-5). As such, these two magazines attempted to promote psychological and emotional maturity by finding one's own lifestyle and becoming an independent woman. The truth is they fulfilled young women's materialistic desires. *An 'an* and *non-no* were also called „catalogue magazines“ (Ueno quoted by Sakamoto 258) because they provided detailed information about the clothes and accessories featured in the magazine – brand names, costs and store locations – so that the readers could purchase the same products shown in the magazine. Sakamoto points out such materialistic lifestyles promoted superficial independence or confidence among readers.

Over thirty years later, Kurihara's magazine, *haru\_mi* was published inheriting the characteristics of *an 'an* and *non-no* in promoting an idealized image of women, but this time as a homemaker. Like the models in *an 'an* and *non-no*, Kurihara demonstrates an „ideal homemaker“ living an ideal lifestyle that many homemakers want. The ideal homemaker that Kurihara exemplifies has creative ideas about cooking and housekeeping tasks, and travels domestically and internationally. She has a supportive husband and successful children while she herself is a supportive wife and mother. This ideal homemaker respects her parents including her in-laws and has good relationships with them. She has a strong belief in how she lives her life with confidence and an assertive attitude. Readers see these images of an ideal homemaker demonstrated by Kurihara in *haru\_mi*, and dream of living like Kurihara. Many of them also gain confidence and display self respect, and are inspired to live their lives like Kurihara does. However, it is also a fantasy that Kurihara creates in *haru\_mi*. Readers can live in this fantasy world by purchasing Kurihara's products, and can have an illusion that they live Kurihara's life by trying her recipes and crafts, adopting her housekeeping strategies, and visiting the places that she does. Like *an 'an* and *non-no*, *haru\_mi* exploits materialistic desires among its readers while it presents itself as a lifestyle advising magazine that enhances self-respect among homemakers.

In the following sections, I will first illustrate how and why Kurihara displays herself as an equal rather than a celebrity to her readers. At the same time, I will also explain how she distinguishes herself from her readers in order to promote herself as an idealized image of a homemaker followed by how cleverly Kurihara applies various

techniques in the magazine carefully balancing her images between equality and difference with her readers.

### How Kurihara Presents Herself in *haru\_mi*

In reality, Kurihara is far different from her readers. She belongs to an upper social class in Japanese society and wealthier than most homemakers, which has allowed her to remodel her kitchen more than ten times, so far. Kurihara serves as CEO of her company, and she has a personal manager who manages her schedule and assistants who help her cook and go grocery shopping for her. Because she turned her kitchen into a test kitchen and shooting studio, she does not need to commute every day. The Japanese media nicknamed her a „charismatic homemaker“ because of her successful business career even though her husband is in charge of the day-to-day operations of her multi-million yen company.

Unlike in the U.S., where climbing the social ladder through individual hard work is valued and admired, it is more important in Japanese culture to look and act like any other member of society than to appear as an independent, self-made individual. Thus, Kurihara displays herself as an equal to her readers; 1) she emphasizes her role as a daughter and wife, 2) she denies her status as „charismatic homemaker“, and 3) she successfully displays herself as a fellow homemaker to the readers of her magazine.

### Role as a Wife and a Mother

Regardless of her social status and prominence, Kurihara's roles as a wife, mother, and daughter are a commonality she shares with her readers. She often invites her family

members, especially her mother and her husband, into her magazine. By appearing and speaking as a wife, mother, and daughter in her TV shows and her magazine, her message becomes more persuasive and her readers can see themselves in Kurihara.

In order to display herself as a homemaker like her readers, Kurihara shows her interactions with her mother and her husband. She gives credits to both of them for her success today because they taught her the basics of traditional Japanese and Western style meals. Her mother appears in almost every issue of *haru\_mi*. Although her mother does not produce recipes for the magazine, she appears as a teacher and demonstrates her recipes to pass down her skills to her daughter. The purpose of this column is to appreciate traditional Japanese meals many women no longer cook because these meals are often time consuming compared to more commonly made western-style Japanese meals. However, the mother-daughter cooking demonstration displays Kurihara as a cook-in-training who still needs lessons from her mother. In addition, Kurihara often compares herself with her mother in order to emphasize Kurihara's imperfections rather than her mastery, in order to promote her image as a homemaker like her readers.

Similarly, Kurihara's husband, Reiji, appears in the magazine at least once a year. Again, Kurihara praises Reiji as a supportive husband and a great mentor. She gives him full credit for who she is today as she states in an interview; "If I had not met him, I would not have been who I am today. My husband is a person who changed my life" (Kibayashi 64)<sup>33</sup>. Though Japanese women's social status has improved, women are still socially disadvantaged compared with men. In Kurihara's case, she had to depend on her husband in order to venture into the competitive world of business because of his strong

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<sup>33</sup> My own translation. Originally written in Japanese as 彼とめぐり合わなければ今の私は存在しない。夫は私の人生を変えた人です。

connections with mass media. Kurihara thus creates an impression that she did not have ability to climb up the social ladder without her husband's help.

#### Denial of Being a „Charismatic Homemaker“

Kurihara also emphasizes that she is an ordinary homemaker like her readers. It has been quite some time since Japanese mass media started calling her a „charismatic homemaker“. However, she disputes the accuracy of this description. In an interview, she says “A person with „charisma“ means someone who many people find unapproachable, doesn't it? Since I am approachable, I am totally different from a charismatic person” (“Ryōribon” 61)<sup>34</sup>. If she were to accept being called a „charismatic homemaker“ and to act like one, she would separate herself from her fellow homemaker readers. In order to maintain her authenticity and credibility, she cannot admit that she is a charismatic homemaker, especially when she claims that being a homemaker is her inspiration for what she does. She reminds her readers that she did not receive professional training as a chef, indicating that she is not necessarily better than her fellow homemakers. If Kurihara promoted her ideas as an „expert professional“, her advice to her readers would become more authoritative and no longer a „shared experience“ of peers. Although many women today have employment outside their homes, how well they handle housekeeping tasks, child-rearing, and living expenses has been a benchmark of quality as a homemaker (Hara 78). Such benchmarks, established by Japanese society, have developed standards among Japanese women. After all, most homemakers have their own way of handling daily housekeeping tasks, and feel they are specialists in housekeeping; they do not want

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<sup>34</sup> My own translation. Originally written in Japanese as カリスマって、手の届かないような人のことですよ。私は届くから全然違いますね。



others tell them what to do. They welcome suggestions but not directions, so it is crucial for Kurihara to suggest to them her ideas as one of many options available.

### Depiction of Equal Status in *haru\_mi*

Moreover, *haru\_mi* compiles all of Kurihara's effort to display herself as an equal to her readers. What stands out the most in *haru\_mi* is its writing style; the titles and the articles are often written in a polite form where most sentences end with ---*desu*. For example, the main component of the first issue titled "*Aki wa gohan ga gochisō desu* (In autumn, rice is the main dish"<sup>35</sup>), appears on the cover and the main article of the magazine. Many articles and explanations of dishes throughout the magazine are also written in the same form. The Japanese polite form creates a distance between the speaker and the listener as strangers and not as acquaintances. At the same time, the distance also maintains a certain level of politeness and respect toward each other. *Haru-mi* uses words such as „I“, „my“, „we“, and „our“ as in „this is how I prepare for Christmas“, „this is how we celebrate New Year in our family“ or „this is what we [the Kuriharas] make when all family members get together“ in the descriptions of pictures, essays, and titles of different articles in the magazine. These words are intended to personalize the events illustrated in the magazine. In addition, Kurihara demonstrates that she is simply sharing her practice and perspectives because what she suggests in the magazine may not work for everyone. In this way, the magazine expresses politeness and respect toward her readers rather than speaking with authority.

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<sup>35</sup> In Japanese, a word *gochisō* (ご馳走) has two meanings. When it describes the entire meal as an extraordinary meal in presentation and contents, „treat“ would be the best English translation. Another meaning of „*gochisō*“ is food or drink that tastes good and the main feature of the meal. Based on the context of the magazine, I translated „*gochisō*“ as „main dish“ because the magazine article highlighted rice as a main dish.

Besides the article title in the polite form, *haru\_mi*'s front cover also represents Kurihara as a fellow homemaker in Japanese society. According to my e-mail interview with Kurihara, she and her editorial team wanted to include Kurihara's first name in the magazine title to achieve that impression. However, they wanted to give a more sophisticated impression on the title rather than just using her first name as is. Among the many ideas they discussed, Kurihara selected „haru\_mi“ because she liked its stylish appearance. The title could have been written in Japanese, but writing it in the Western alphabet gives it a more sophisticated image for Japanese readers.<sup>36</sup> There are many rules on how and when we use capital letters in English writing, but the basic rule is to capitalize the first letter of the first word of a sentence. If the name is written as „HARUMI“ on the magazine title, the overall impression becomes too direct and strong, and does not reflect her desire to be one of many. Therefore her first name must be in lower case. In addition, an underscore must be inserted between „u“ and „m“ because that is how the characters of her name break down in Japanese. Inserting an underscore in the name creates a more sophisticated image than just writing the name as is. In fact, an underscore also means „to emphasize“ in English. While the overall impression of the title is softened using small letters, the underscore still emphasizes that the magazine is about Harumi Kurihara.

Similarly, Kurihara creates a strong yet modest image on the front cover. While she appears on every cover of the magazine, she does not look directly into the camera even though she is in the center of a picture. In the first issue, she is looking outside from the living room. In the second issue, she seems to look straight ahead, but she is actually

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<sup>36</sup> There is a possibility that the title in the Western alphabet reflects Kurihara's intention of targeting international market in the future even though Kurihara denies it (*Shūkan Bunshun* 161).

not looking into the camera. She is looking at her cat on the third issue, and in the fourth one she is looking completely away from the camera as if she is talking to someone outside of the scene [Figure 3]. This is a technique frequently used in Japanese photography where the subject looks away from the camera rather than looking into it. This is based on a belief that looking straight into the camera represents the subject's desire for attention while looking away suggests a desire to be a part of one's surroundings. Therefore, even though this is Kurihara's magazine, she avoids looking into the camera in order to become a part of her community rather than representing the magazine.

### History of Japanese Women's Roles and Identity Crisis

*Haru\_mi* also represents Kurihara as a woman who balances her role between that of a homemaker and a working woman. Kurihara, who was a stay-at-home homemaker for ten years before she started to work, acts in a way that she understands both roles. While women have many roles in the workplace, they can share and feel empathy about the difficulties of balancing work outside of the home and being a homemaker. Therefore,



Figure 3. *haru\_mi* Vol. 1-4 (2006-7)

talking about their challenges as homemakers creates a sense of solidarity among them.

Japanese feminism scholar, Aiko Hada pointed out in the mid-1980s that many Japanese women in their thirties face an identity crisis. Japanese society considered women as adults only when they got married and had children, and such a view continues to exist even today. Even though more young women find their purpose in life in their career or other things, rather than in marriage, many still set their ultimate goal as getting married and becoming a mother. Hada also pointed out that Japanese women's identity crises happen in their mid-thirties when a married couple often encounters psychological and societal differences between them. While a husband finds his purpose and goals in his career, a wife experiences emptiness in her life because she loses her purpose in life if she does not have children or when her children grow up and need less attention from her. Hada argues that many Japanese women unconsciously tie their identities to marriage, childbirth and motherhood. However, they later realize that moving through these stages does not give them a lasting sense of identity, and thus they become insecure about their future direction as an individual. As a result, these women are forced to revisit their adolescent goal of „wanting to be their true self“ which they left behind at the end of their teen-age years. Because these women are often in their thirties when they face this identity crisis, Hada calls this „reaching adolescence in the thirties“ (179-180). In fact, Kurihara herself reported experiencing emptiness during this period, but never questioned why she felt such emptiness at that time. Instead, she developed various tips for enjoying housekeeping tasks in order to motivate herself and feeling satisfaction with everyday life.

In addition to an identity crisis in their thirties, there is a Japanese cultural practice that makes many Japanese women question their identity; it is the enforcement

of a family name change upon marriage. Traditionally, Japanese women are required to change their family name to their husband's upon marriage unless the husband is adopted into the bride's family. This legal process causes many women to lose their self-identity because their „name“ represents who they are based on their family and personal history under their natal name. Changing a woman's family name to her husband's family name creates a hierarchical relationship between a husband and a wife. It gives her the impression that she has become a part of her husband's family rather than starting a new family with her husband. Ida also points out that losing one's family name takes away a woman's independence about how they live their lives (208-210). Today, many Japanese women are working when they marry, and continue working after their marriage.

However, in Japan, people are usually addressed by their last name, rather than first name at work. Women are now called by their new name, which requires a psychosocial adjustment in giving up the name they grew up with and were used to. It is true that many women are proud of their new names especially if their husband or their family holds high social status and reputation in the society. At the same time, wives are expected to act properly in order not to disgrace their new family names. In Japanese society, there are expectations about women taking on the role of homemaker, such as being responsible for child rearing, being a supportive and devoted wife who is willing to sacrifice herself for her husband, etc. Kurihara unites readers' inclination to enrich their lives while maintaining their roles as homemakers and working women through *haru\_mi*. Many readers of *haru\_mi* idealize Kurihara and look at her success as their own success as a homemaker, because Kurihara gives an impression that they too, can establish their identity by being a homemaker as long as they follow her advice.

Since the 1980s, fewer young women consider marriage as the in ultimate life goal (Sugimoto 153), but those who get married and do not go back to work still experience an identity crisis when they become empty nesters, or even earlier. There are also women who are not empty nesters but still experience an identity crisis or feel frustration toward their husbands. Meanwhile, women who continue to work after marriage and/or have children are still expected to handle most housekeeping tasks. A report by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications released in 2006 revealed how little help women receive from their husbands. In a household where both wife and husband work, the wife spends an average of 3 hours 58 minutes per day on housekeeping tasks while the husband spends only 26 minutes (quoted in Inoue 19). Surprisingly, women rarely receive compliments or appreciative words from their family, especially from their husbands, despite juggling both employment outside their homes and housekeeping tasks. However, many women struggle to find their identities while trying to fulfill their traditional roles as wives and mothers and pursue their career goals. To those readers, Kurihara states in an interview;

Even if you do housekeeping tasks perfectly, most husbands do not praise you for your hard work or say anything to make you happy (...). So, it is important for you to enjoy doing housekeeping tasks for your own sake no matter what reaction your husband has. (“Ryōribon” 62)<sup>37</sup>

Japanese often blame those who do not do good work, but they rarely recognize others’ achievements because people are expected to do good work in the first place. Likewise, husbands expect wives to do good work, but wives are frustrated with their husbands

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<sup>37</sup> My own translation. Originally written in Japanese as 家事をする自分を楽しんでくれるのは、やっぱり自分なんです。だから人にはあまり期待しないことです。家のことをきちんとやったからといって、ほめてくれたり、心が弾むようなことを言ってくれるだんなさんは、そういないでしょう。…だから相手がどんな反応をしようと1人で楽しめるようにしておくって大切なことだと思います。

because they think their husbands take their hard work for granted. However, Kurihara often recognizes the frustration homemakers feel in her interviews and essays. By doing so, she validates homemakers' feelings and at the same time gives a different perspective to her readers in order to let them shift their focus from frustration with housekeeping chores to improving their lives and being satisfied with what they do.

### How to Enjoy Housekeeping Tasks

While creating her image as an equal to her readers, Kurihara differentiates herself from other celebrity homemakers by providing advice on more than cooking and housekeeping. What differentiates Kurihara from other celebrity homemakers is that she advises women on how to turn housekeeping tasks into enjoyable activities. In many interviews, Kurihara says how much she loves housekeeping tasks and being a homemaker and she demonstrates housekeeping tasks on TV and in her magazine. In her essay, she writes "Isn't it fun to do housekeeping tasks? I'd rather do housekeeping tasks than going outside to have fun" ("Omotenashi" 23).<sup>38</sup> Yet, not every homemaker enjoys housekeeping tasks like Kurihara does because these are obligations to be performed by a responsible homemaker. Other Japanese lifestyle/cooking magazines such as *Orange Page* and *Lettuce Club* offer „how-to“ advice for daily tasks and explain how to quickly and effectively complete these tasks. In contrast, *haru\_mi* offers specific advice on how to „enjoy“ housekeeping tasks like Kurihara, specifically in Kurihara's short personal essay at the beginning of each issue. This is a carry-over from *Suteki reshipi* which used to say "I Received a Small Happiness (小さな幸せもらった)" where Kurihara shared an

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<sup>38</sup> My own translation. Originally written in Japanese as 家事って楽しくないですか？私は、遊びに出かけるより家のことをしているほうが好きなんです。

experience that gave her positive energy such as her garden, T-shirts she wore every day, her late mother-in-law, etc. On the contrary, her new column titled “Wholehearted Message from My Kitchen (キッチンから心をこめて)” focuses more on Kurihara herself. Her philosophical advice is intended to motivate her readers to change their attitude toward housekeeping tasks giving different perspectives by sharing random thoughts about her everyday life and stories tied to the topics of each issue.

She often uses the word „*samonai* (さもない)” which means “things that are not a big deal, but a little bit special” (*Suteki reshipi* 39: 142).<sup>39</sup> She tries to demonstrate the meaning of this word in things she does every day from cleaning, cooking, doing crafts, gardening, to publishing her magazine. In the first issue, she gives her thoughts about serving tea, saying that “people may think it's just serving tea, but I would like to treat it like handling a piece of treasure... because I feel like a simple task like serving tea can determine the impression I give to those to whom I serve my tea” (*haru\_mi* 1:6).<sup>40</sup> Even though housekeeping tasks are not a „big deal” to her, she handles them with care as if they are special tasks to appreciate. A picture of an unglazed small tea pot and a plate with squeezed shaped sweet mashed chestnuts, and a cup of green tea appear next to the essay. Using the unglazed pot and the plate, *haru\_mi* uses an aestheticized image to draw her readers to follow Kurihara’s lifestyle.

Kurihara has promoted such ideas since *Suteki reshipi* but she does it more so in *haru\_mi*. She expounds on the importance of showing an appreciation for everything

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<sup>39</sup> My own translation. Originally written in Japanese as たいしたことではないけれど、ちょっといいことの意味。

<sup>40</sup> My own translation. Originally written in Japanese as たかが一杯のお茶になんでそこまで？と思われるかもしれませんが、そのくたかが>にこだわりたいと思います(in the second paragraph of the column)。なぜならその一杯で私の印象が決まるようなきがするから...(in the first paragraph of the column)。



around them. By doing so, unlike Stewart, Kurihara emphasizes her roles as a wife and a mother and a member of her family. Her travel column reflects how she appreciates the fact that she has a supportive family, friends, and colleagues, which one often takes for granted.

Kurihara often travels to foreign countries such as Italy, England, America, China and Japanese cities like Okinawa, Kanazawa, Hokkaido, etc, and her trips are featured in *haru\_mi*. She presents her international travel as more than just a fun time away from her busy schedule, but also as a moment to reflect on her life. In the first issue of *haru\_mi*, she said

A person cannot live alone. Understanding the importance of having family and neighbors, appreciating the fact that they are there for you, things and lifestyle that I value as a person... I was reminded of these important things through this trip (45).<sup>41</sup>

She suggests that her readers should use their time away from home as an opportunity to reflect on who they are and be grateful for what they have in their life. Kurihara advises her readers to appreciate what they have in their lives in order to promote the acceptance of women's roles as a wife and mother who supports her family.

What the reader sees in *haru\_mi*, therefore, is a fantasy world where there are no obligations (it is often the case that wives have to look after their husbands even during the trip), no frustrations or inconveniences which many travelers often experience such as delays in transportation, miscommunication due to a lack of language ability, etc.

*Haru\_mi* creates an impression that Kurihara travels to foreign countries alone and

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<sup>41</sup> My own translation. Originally written in Japanese as 人は一人では生きていけない。家族や隣人の大切さ、ありがたさ、人として大切にしたいこと大事にしたい暮らし...忘れてはいけない大切なことをもう一度思い起こさせてくれました。

appears to be more relaxed and enjoying herself than what most readers would experience. Many Japanese homemakers join an all-inclusive package tour rather than travel on their own because of its convenience and safety. These tours visit many cities in a few days so that their interaction with local people is very limited. Kurihara actually stays at a long-term hotel with a small kitchen if available, in order to get the feeling of living in the area. She visits a local family and learns home-style cooking from the locals while she cooks Japanese meals for them. When Kurihara is with her husband, she gives the impression of a devoted wife who depends on him. However, once she is away from her husband, she presents herself as an independent, self-sufficient and outgoing woman, even though she actually travels with her staff and everything is prearranged.

Whenever she visits a Japanese city, she visits local artisans who make lacquer or glass ware, potters, bakers, restaurants and traditional Japanese inns. Kurihara introduces their artifacts and businesses and often markets their goods in *haru\_mi* through mail or online orders. While such an introduction by Kurihara herself may help local businesses, it is important to note that merchandising in Kurihara's magazine also exploits consumers' materialistic desires for the goods made by the artisans providing merchandise for Kurihara. By marketing the products as limited editions and exclusive productions, it creates a psychological sense of urgency among her readers who then feel compelled to buy these products.

As the title of the magazine indicates, *haru\_mi* is all about Harumi Kurihara. On the left hand side under the title, the phrase "Having an Ordinary Life Is Fun (ふつうの暮らしが楽しい)" appears in a small font as if it were the motto of this magazine. In *Suteki reshipi*, there was a similar phrase next to the title; "Making Everyday Life a Little

Happier (毎日の暮らしをちょっと幸せに)”. These two phrases are significantly different in their meanings. While the first phrase invites the readers to enjoy everyday life, the second phrase encourages the readers to make an extra effort to make their lives happier. In the final issue of *Suteki reshipi*, Kurihara wrote “In my ordinary everyday life, I, who very much enjoy doing housekeeping tasks, have developed a stronger feeling that I want to enjoy my everyday life more and more, that I must enjoy my life more” (39:5).<sup>42</sup> Then she took concrete steps to enjoy her life more by publishing a new magazine, *haru\_mi*. Kurihara suggests that one look for enjoyment in one’s daily life and routine rather than strive continually to complete as many tasks as possible. As the previous quote suggests, *haru\_mi* has more advice to „enjoy“ everyday life compared to her previous magazine, *Suteki reshipi*.

Hirano, et. al. define a pleasant lifestyle as one that can be accomplished when the basic elements of life such as employment, family, leisure, and social life are unified in good balance (195). *Haru\_mi* questions how readers view themselves and interact with their family members every day, and whether they take good care of themselves because without self-respect, they cannot respect others. According to Kurihara, they cannot respect others, it is difficult to maintain a good balance that leads to a pleasant lifestyle.

Kurihara shares her belief in an interview that a good lifestyle is based on good cooking. No matter how good Kurihara’s lifestyle looks, if a reader tries three recipes from Kurihara’s book and none of them tastes good, the reader will never use Kurihara’s recipes again. Therefore, Kurihara repeatedly experiments with each recipe until she is certain that anyone could reproduce exactly the same taste that she has created when she

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<sup>42</sup> My own translation. Originally written in Japanese as いつもと変らない毎日の中で、家事が大好きな私は、さらにもっと暮らしを楽しみたい、楽しまなければという気持ちが強くなってきています。

produces new recipes (Ryōribon 61).<sup>43</sup> Kurihara's recipes are mixtures of western, Chinese, and Japanese cuisines, but their ingredients are so common that most households have them in their refrigerators and most recipes take less than an hour to complete. Kurihara's recipes do not call for special ingredients or cooking tools, either. They are so easy that even the readers with little experience in cooking would not hesitate to try one. However, Kurihara values the process of cooking not just the results, as well as maintaining simple procedures of recipes and good taste. She is confident and proud that her readers can reproduce the exact same taste of her recipes. *Haru\_mi* suggests to its readers various ways of arranging food just like *an-an* and *non-no* taught their readers how to coordinate fashion in the 1970s. However, all dishes and utensils introduced in *haru\_mi* are Kurihara's brand products or artifacts that Kurihara sells for artists. Readers can be wonderful homemakers in a fantasy world, but in order to make their own living space as similar to the one in the fantasy world they see in *haru\_mi*, and live the lifestyle Kurihara suggests, it is crucial for readers to purchase Kurihara's products, make Kurihara's recipes and serve them in dishes that Kurihara designs. *Haru\_mi* is not just a cooking magazine; it functions as a catalogue for Kurihara brand products.

### How *haru\_mi* Exploits Materialistic Desire

The first impression *haru\_mi* gives to its readers is that it is a cooking magazine. It contains recipes using mostly vegetables and fish in season or those related to seasonal events such as Christmas and New Year. At the same time, *haru\_mi* also functions as a

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<sup>43</sup> My own translation summary. Originally written in Japanese as どんなに生き方が素敵でも、料理がおいしくなかったらダメ。おそらく、料理の本を買って、そこから３つ作ってみて口に合わなかったら、この人の料理はまずい、ということになっちゃうと思うんですね。

product catalogue. Almost all dishes, utensils, pots and pans are Kurihara brand products, and readers can purchase them at some sixty retail stores all over Japan or through the mail order service that has been available in her magazine since 2001. In fact, more and more Japanese consumers shop online and through catalogue mail order services. In 2010, the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) conducted a survey and gathered data from 1 million Japanese consumers regarding their purchasing desires. They used the data from 3,000 randomly selected participants, and about 90% of them had used an internet mail order service before, and the average number of times people had shopped through the service was 5.7 times in three months. The most frequent users were those in their 40s of both genders, and those who do childrearing and the care of elderly family members at home. Among mail order services, about 93% of the consumers had used the internet while 70% had used mail order catalogues (Web-Tan Forum). Kurihara has offered mail order service both online and through her magazine since *Suteki Reshipi*.

However, *haru\_mi* avoids being labeled as a catalogue in order to appeal to a broader consumer market. Openly characterizing *haru\_mi* as a catalogue magazine for Kurihara's products would be risky because it may not make a profit; consumers rarely spend money on mail order catalogues in order to purchase products.<sup>44</sup> Also, magazine readers may feel pressured to purchase her products. If a reader is an enthusiastic fan, she (or he) would be tempted to buy anything that Kurihara recommended. In reality, however, most homemakers cannot afford to buy new dishes frequently. Even if they

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<sup>44</sup> There are some catalogues sold in Japan such as *Tsūhan Seikatsu* (通販生活) which is a mail-order magazine. Some catalogues have supplemental merchandise such as famous brand bags are also sold in Japan.

could afford it, storage space is limited in Japanese homes. Compared to other homemakers, Kurihara owned more dishes than any of her friends even before she worked as a *ryōri kenkyu ka* (Kibayashi 62, *Mōichido* 92-93). In her experience as a homemaker, Kurihara developed skills to make space to store many dishes in a limited amount of space. She also could not afford to buy dishes until she had her own income. Kurihara said in an interview that she was so excited to have extra income because she could buy new dishes whenever she wanted (“Omotenashi” 23). Like Kurihara in her early days, most homemakers do not have a place to store dishes other than one small dish cabinet and cannot afford to buy new dishes often. In spite of the perception of Japanese society as being male centered, wives often are in charge of managing family finances because husbands hand over their pay checks to their wives. Wives in turn give their husbands allowances and manage the household budget, and their income from their part-time jobs (if they have any) is often limited (Sugimoto 161-4).<sup>45</sup> Therefore, wives need to be aware of what the family needs and can afford.

Furthermore, Japanese even today mainly shop with cash rather than credit for fear of losing control over their finances by having debts. In fact, *haru\_mi*’s mail order business did not accept credit cards until the early 2000s (and the subscription for her magazine still does not accept credit cards!). Consumers had to make payment on delivery of merchandise or direct deposit. If the magazine had a strong image as a product catalogue, readers would tend to look at the magazine contents as nothing more than a series of objects.

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<sup>45</sup> Many homemakers who work part-time limit their annual income up to 1.03 million yen in order to maintain their husbands’ dependants’ allowances (Sugimoto 161-2).

In order to avoid being labeled a product catalog magazine, *haru\_mi* creates a more sophisticated and luxurious image than competing magazines such as *Tsuhana Seikatsu* by keeping its contents as simple as possible. For example, compared to other Japanese cooking or lifestyle magazines, *haru\_mi* contains fewer colors and words; it only uses black and white with a traditional Japanese font throughout the magazine except for Kurihara's name and the title on the cover. This unification gives a clean image as a whole, and using a traditional font creates a formal image, because it is similar to the font used to create legal documents. The quality of the paper is better than other cooking magazines available in Japan and this helps readers keep the magazine in good condition for a long time even if they use it regularly for cooking. In addition, the contents are much more selective than its predecessor *Suteki reshipi*. In each issue, there are no more than seventy recipes, one travelogue by Kurihara herself, and one craft item that Kurihara herself made. There are fewer pictures than in *Suteki reshipi*, but each picture is bigger and has fewer objects within the frame to create an uncrowded look. Furthermore, the compositions of these photos also enhance the visual quality of each dish and highlight the distinctive beauty of each dish and utensil used in the magazine [Figure 4].



Figure 4: *Suteki reshipi* Vol. 13 (1999)

Many products featured in *haru\_mi* are pricier than similar items sold in supermarkets, and consumers can prepare Kurihara's recipes without using her products. Nevertheless, *haru\_mi* successfully induces its readers to purchase Kurihara's products in various ways: 1) *haru\_mi* introduces new products and services that reflect and meet consumers' wants and needs, 2) Kurihara's brand appeals to a broad range of homemaker generations instead of to a single group of users, 3) *haru\_mi* features only selected high quality products, and 4) Kurihara demonstrates how to use or wear her products in the magazine.

First, Kurihara's products range from small dishes, utensils, pots and pans to seasonings, accessories and formal wear that target women of various generations, and these items have versatility. For example, liquid seasoning in a glass bottle has lines for measurement so that consumers can measure the seasoning without using a measuring spoon; furthermore, consumers can reuse the containers for a long time.

Like Kurihara, *haru\_mi* tries to meet its readers' needs as much as possible. Based on the METI report, most consumers shop online or make mail orders between 9 and 11pm when most consumers have free time (Web-tan Forum). Kurihara's mail and online order services target consumers who do not have time to go shopping due to their work schedule or child care, as well as those who do not have access to her retail stores. For these readers, mail order service allows them to order products anytime from their homes.

Second, *haru\_mi* also introduces a variety of dishes in the magazine targeting a broader range of generations; it features Western and Asian ceramics and porcelain, Japanese traditional lacquer ware, earthenware, and glassware. Many items use bright



colors and trendy looks and designs that attract younger readers and homemakers with small children on a tight budget, Kurihara offers affordable products such as placemats and small dishes that make their life more enjoyable. On the other hand, the middle-aged and older generations of homemakers who have developed their own tastes tend to purchase a few, but simple, long-lasting, high-quality dishes and utensils. Targeting these readers *haru\_mi* introduces more traditional looking dishes and high quality items. At the same time, *haru\_mi* introduces unconventional ways of serving food using Kurihara's products. Usually, Japanese traditional dishes such as ceramics and porcelain are used to serve traditional Japanese meals such as sushi, tempura, cooked rice, etc. However, *haru\_mi* creates a different impression of traditional meals by using more modern-looking dishes or serving western style food such as croquettes, casseroles, and pasta in traditional looking Japanese dishes [Figure 5 and 6]. By offering different ideas for serving food to readers, *haru\_mi* also makes readers realize what a different impression serving dishes can make with common food such as grilled fish or white rice.

Third, while many of Kurihara's products remain the same, a couple of new



Figure 5. Risotto with Prosciutto in Japanese style dish

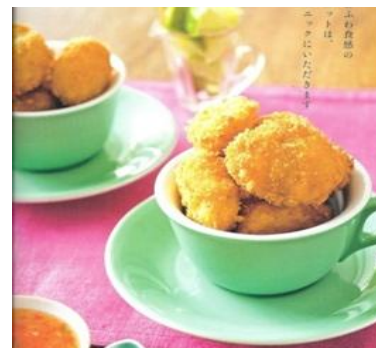


Figure 6. Shrimp Nuggets in a coffee cup

Products are introduced in each issue of the magazine. They are usually items by various artisans Kurihara has found over the years. Kurihara tells stories about how she found a particular artifact or the reason why Kurihara uses a particular pot to cook rice, and how well it works. She has established her image as a simple and straight forward person with good taste and a drive for high quality through her work as a TV cooking personality, cookbooks and magazines. This image of Kurihara also bolsters her reputation as a connoisseur of high quality artifacts influenced by her husband and her mother, who, according to Kurihara, had good taste and a knowledge of quality items. She indirectly encourages her readers to purchase these artifacts by indicating they are great as gifts as well as for personal use for many years if not a life-time.

*Haru\_mi* is primarily a cooking magazine though. It has various recipes from appetizers to desserts using common ingredients any household would have such as tofu, meat, dried mushrooms, and seasonal vegetables and fish. Like a fashion magazine, Kurihara demonstrates various ways to use her products and utensils in her cooking. Products sold in a department store are displayed by category. A soup bowl displayed in a department store usually is accompanied by the utensils that go with it. It only gives one idea of how to use it. Even if there are store clerks who can explain other ways to use certain cooking utensils or descriptions of each product, it is difficult for readers to imagine other uses by just looking at Kurihara's products in a department store. However, Kurihara shows many ways to use the same product. For example, a deep frying pan used in many of Kurihara's recipes functions in multiple ways. In order to present this product's versatility effectively, the third issue of *haru\_mi* had a special article using Kurihara's frying pan to boil hot water to cook soba noodles, to grill meat and fish, to

steam dumplings, to make curry and pasta sauce, and even to make desserts! Japanese houses are often called „rabbit hutches“ due to their small size with even smaller spaces for the kitchen and storage compared to the living spaces. In this situation, a large frying pan that functions as a large pot as well as a steamer not only saves money but space in a small kitchen. It is also a time-saver for homemakers because they only need to wash one utensil instead of two or more. Rather than simply displaying it as a frying pan in her retail stores, Kurihara illustrates its multifunctionality in her magazine to better inform her readers about the product.

Kurihara also appears in the magazine as a model for her line of clothing that is categorized into two different types - aprons and casual wear, such as T-shirts, skirts, and yoga pants. These have clean, modern designs with border lines, polka-dots or plain monotone colors like dark green, black, and brown. The casual wear is not too casual so that women still can respond to sudden visitors. They do not have lots of decoration such as beads or prints that are often characterized as clothes for older women. The other type of clothing product, aprons, symbolize Kurihara's role as a homemaker. She became famous for the *gomidashi epuron* (apron) [Figure 7] she designed when she was a stay-at-home homemaker. In Japan, *gomidashi* or „taking out the garbage“ in English, must be done in the morning. There is no individual garbage bin per household like in the U.S., and the garbage must be dropped off at an assigned location right before the garbage track comes to pick it up, otherwise the bag will be destroyed by stray animals or crows. Today, taking out the garbage has become more of the husband's responsibility, but still many homemakers are responsible for this task. Regardless of how far you have to walk to haul out the trash, you want to look good when you step outside your house so that you



Figure 7. *Gomidashi epuron*

do not embarrass yourself when running into your neighbors. A person like Kurihara, whose husband is a famous TV personality, is especially conscious of how she looks. However, sometimes the garbage truck comes as early as seven o'clock in the morning, and it is difficult to dress up just to take out the trash early in the morning. Therefore, Kurihara invented an apron that covers almost the entire lower body like a jumper skirt. Wearing this apron and a T-shirt, a woman can still look elegant and composed. Since then, Kurihara has designed over 500 aprons to meet various needs and tastes of homemakers.

Thus, Kurihara indirectly asserts that women who wear shabby clothes will embarrass themselves if they have an unexpected visitor like a delivery person. The underlying argument is that if you do not want to let yourself or others down, you always need to look presentable and that if you wear her clothes you can respond to these unexpected visitors with ease and confidence. In reality, these clothes look good only on Kurihara and people who have similar a body type to hers. She is slim (probably considered too skinny by Western standards), and looks younger than her age, but she

does not necessarily look fashionable like a professional model. This imbalance between her skinny body size like a professional model and her appearance like any another homemaker in the neighborhood makes her image more approachable and believable.

Overall, *haru\_mi* minimizes the pressure on its readers to purchase her products. Most pictures of *haru\_mi* are shot in Kurihara's home kitchen and living room. Sometimes she shows the inside of her refrigerator, kitchen shelves, laundry areas and her personal closet in the magazine. Her life style is often described as natural, simple, and unostentatious in magazine articles. In *haru\_mi*, Kurihara openly displays private aspects of her life in order to make her lifestyle appear more realistic, which gives the impression to her readers that her lifestyle reflects her personality.

Kurihara presents an idealized image of a homemaker not just as a good cook but as someone having a broad perspective on life. By exposing her entire lifestyle from the time she wakes up at five o'clock in the morning until her private dinner time with her husband, she sets up a „real“ lifestyle in the fantasy world of *haru\_mi*. At first glance, Kurihara seems distinctive in emphasizing the importance of women's spiritual and psychological balance in their roles as devoted wife, mother and individual woman. By reading her magazine, readers see themselves in Kurihara and try to be the diligent and devoted homemaker that Kurihara portrays in *haru\_mi*. Starting from cooking, they slowly adopt Kurihara's lifestyle, but most importantly, they create a fantasy world that they see in *haru\_mi* in their everyday lives by purchasing her products. Therefore, *haru\_mi* must function as a product catalogue which allows readers to „purchase“ a fantasy world.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

Both Kurihara and Stewart promote the idea of doing housekeeping tasks as enjoyable activities in order to make homemakers' lives better. However, the way they do so is not the same. The traditional view of housekeeping is for a homemaker to do the housekeeping tasks in order to maintain good health and a living environment for her family. Stewart puts less emphasis on this because to her, housekeeping tasks are not obligations a homemaker has to fulfill but a choice she makes to enrich her life. This is not the case for Kurihara. She maintains the traditional view and depicts a homemaker as a devoted wife and mother, and reflects this viewpoint in her magazine through cooking meals together with her family members. Her idealized image of woman can be obtained by purchasing her products and following the advice she provides. However, the fantasy Kurihara creates also psychologically influences her readers.

For Stewart, so far as one has enough resources (time and money) to maintain a household, and the ability to make household decisions on one's own, a homemaker can obtain the idealized image Stewart promotes. What Stewart emphasizes is about individual needs, not about what is good for the family. Her advice is also very much focused on identifying what one needs physically and materially. Even if homemakers do not have skills, they can get help with the right equipment and ingredients.

By introducing practical information and advice on what women want such as a beautiful house with gardens, equipment and skills to handle housekeeping tasks easily, *MSL* creates a fantasy world where readers can dream of having a lifestyle similar to Stewart's. Even if such a fantasy world pictured in *MSL* is far removed from reality, readers can just imagine and step into the fantasy world for the moment by reading *MSL* and by trying her products if they can afford buying per products. However, readers would also most likely lose interest in the magazine if *MSL* only promoted fantasy among its readers. Therefore, while practicality is not a priority in *MSL*, it does provide some practical information that readers can adopt in their daily lives. In order to capture their attention and sustain the readers' interests, *MSL* maintains a balance between what is adoptable (reality) and what is not adoptable (fantasy). A person who lives in a small old apartment most likely would not be able to remodel her room like a five bedroom apartment in Manhattan. However, anyone can try small cooking tips they can immediately adopt into her life.

The idealized image of a homemaker that Stewart lays out is ultimately her creation based on her ideal world. The people who live in the ideal world Stewart creates do not need to take care of the housekeeping tasks because, like Stewart, they have several helpers and assistants who can take care of the tasks around her house.<sup>46</sup> Even if they themselves choose not to do laundry or cooking, the necessary housekeeping tasks would get done. However, the lifestyles of most readers of *MSL* are far different from what is depicted in *MSL*; many are married, have children and have employment outside

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<sup>46</sup> Stewart has quite a few employees who assist her in and around the house according to Lloyd Allan's *Being Martha*.

the home to support the household finances.<sup>47</sup> For them, there is no choice but to do housekeeping tasks by themselves because they cannot afford to hire helpers. Stewart should know this based on the demography of *MSL* readers and users of her mail order service. Regardless, Stewart continues to create a fantasy world, which does not consider that many readers have a family and a job. No matter how hard Stewart promotes her image as a homemaker, she does not have a family she lives with. Usually, a homemaker needs to negotiate with her family about how to handle household needs, but Stewart herself does not have to engage in such negotiations.

In recent issues of *MSL*, especially after Stewart's granddaughter was born, there have been more ideas and advice that are beneficial to families with children.<sup>48</sup> However, *MSL* issues in 1997 rarely included such ideas and advice. After her independence from Time Warner, Stewart directed *MSL* as the editor-in-chief. Although she was busy with establishing and operating MSLO, Stewart had the most influence on *MSL* issues in 1997 because *MSL* was the flagship project for MSLO at that time. In the November 1997 issue of *MSL*, Stewart visited a family that owned a small restaurant in Connecticut over Thanksgiving. Traditionally, Thanksgiving dinner is shared with family members and close friends. At this dinner, there were only ten people sitting around the table, and Stewart was the only person who did not have a partner. Thanksgiving and Christmas are the main events *MSL* covers every year, and it always emphasizes the importance of family gatherings. In spite of such advice, Stewart appeared to be out of place in the

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<sup>47</sup> For demographics of *MSL* readership, refer to page 21 of this thesis.

<sup>48</sup> She published a craft magazine as I mentioned in the previous footnote, but she openly shares her experience with her granddaughter in the magazine, and appears with a toddler in one of the Macy's advertisements which had never occurred in the past.



setting. She is a homemaker without a family who promotes the importance of family gathering.

Nobody, including the MSLO employees, instructs Stewart on what to do, or negotiates with her about everyday life activities.<sup>49</sup> If there is any person who can direct Stewart what to do, it is Stewart herself. That is why Stewart can demonstrate the role of ideal homemaker who is self-sufficient, independent, and able to perform any task. In fact, she has to demonstrate such a role because she does not have anyone she can rely on, and as a perfectionist who cannot trust or satisfy other people's work, she has to do everything on her own.<sup>50</sup>

American society has clearer social class distinctions and more racial and cultural diversity than many other cultures. I would argue that in such a society Stewart is admired by many people and is well known because she embodies the American dream. Rising from a modest Polish immigrant working class background, Stewart has established a multi-million dollar business by providing domestic advice. While she attained fame and success as an entrepreneur, she also experienced adversity and setbacks including the insider trading incident that led her to imprisonment. At the same time, she demonstrated toughness and optimism by planning her return to the business world before and during her imprisonment. She left a strong impression among Americans that she had survived and overcome significant hardships and conspicuously came back to the business world upon her release from prison. Stewart keeps influencing many women

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<sup>49</sup> For information on how Stewart operates her business and manages her employees, refer to *Being Martha* by Lloyd Allan and *The Martha Rules* by Martha Stewart.

<sup>50</sup> When she has her assistants work on projects, she has high expectations. For more information about Stewart's high expectations for her employees, refer to *The Martha Rules* by Martha Stewart.

(and men) not only because she is a successful business woman, but also because she has performed the ideal image of an ideal woman who achieved the American dream.

In contrast, Kurihara is from a well-to-do family who had almost everything she needed throughout her life. Compared to American society, the social class distinction in Japanese society is not as noticeable and dramatic. To most Japanese people who are both content and accepting of the social class position they are born into, showcasing an upper social class lifestyle the way *MSL* suggests does not sound either desirable or even plausible to Japanese readers. Japanese culture is also based on collectivistic cultural values, and a successful person who acts differently from others is often viewed negatively. As an old Japanese proverb describes it, „*derukui wa utareru* (出る杭は打たれる)“ or „the nail that sticks out gets hammered down.“ As I explained in the previous section, Kurihara describes herself as equal to her readers as a fellow homemaker. Therefore, if she showed things that are not affordable to most readers such as expensive cooking tools and rare ingredients, and a lifestyle that is foreign to them, readers would not be able to relate it to their own lives. Creating an impression of Kurihara as a regular person is essential to solidifying her image as a fellow homemaker to her readers and making her magazine contents more persuasive.

Like Stewart, Kurihara creates a fantasy world through *haru\_mi*, but it is not the main priority. *Haru\_mi* provides more realistic suggestions and recipes that readers can try immediately after they purchase the magazine. Kurihara’s recipes are based on her real life settings. They do not require special equipment or ingredients like *MSL*. Anyone can make what is introduced in the magazine regardless of their cooking skills. Kurihara also demonstrates that she values her relationship with her fans and readers. She invites

her fans and readers to special events at least once a year. I would argue that the direct interaction she has with her fans and readers through these events has a strong impact on her readers in making them believe that the image of Kurihara that they see on the TV and magazine is the same as what they see in person. Kurihara visits each table (she usually does cooking demonstrations and serves what she makes to the participants at the event), and greets each participant during the event. After the event, the editors of *haru\_mi* publish an event report with pictures, and emphasize how excited the participants were to see Kurihara. Therefore, the fans and the readers who could not attend the event still can share some of the same feeling as the participants. Things she suggests in the magazine are easy to adopt, but what is more important is that her readers can continue following her advice. In order to do that, Kurihara needs to make her advice fairly realistic. Otherwise, her readers would lose interest.

However, *haru\_mi* creates a fantasy world through her magazine, which I believe can be divided into two types --- materialistic fantasy and psychological fantasy. Materialistic fantasy, for the most part, can be obtained by cooking meals using Kurihara's recipes, purchasing Kurihara's products and retracing the trips she took. When Kurihara travels both overseas and in Japan for her magazine report, she dines at high-end restaurants and stays at luxurious hotels which often cost more than \$500 per night. For many families especially with children, it is unrealistic to duplicate the same experience she writes about in her magazine. She also often visits artisan workshops and purchases expensive cooking utensils and plates that most homemakers cannot afford. What makes Kurihara different from Stewart, however, is that she „shares“ what she finds on her trips with her readers. She often makes business contracts with artisans and

negotiates with them to make more affordable pots, pans and plates and markets them through her mail order service. In this way, readers of *haru\_mi* can purchase things that are similar to what Kurihara owns. Kurihara's method of „sharing“ things she likes allows readers acquire items available only in the fantasy world by purchasing than through a mail order service.

The other fantasy is a psychological one. This fantasy is based on Kurihara's depiction of her relationship with her family. While Stewart's family members rarely appear in *MSL*, Kurihara routinely emphasizes her relationship with her family, especially with her husband, in her magazine and in many interviews. She and her family appear in the magazine as a model family, free of any conflict and connected in loving and trusting relationships. In reality, however, Kurihara has experienced many hardships because of her husband. In the magazine, he is portrayed as a supportive husband, but he ran as a candidate for the House of Councilors and in the Tokyo Assembly elections which forced him to quit his job as a prominent news anchor of a TV program in the 1970s. After he lost the election, the Kuriharas did not have any income for about a year. Until Kurihara established her company, her husband tried different occupations but was unsuccessful in them, according to Kibayashi (64). Despite such hardships, she often discusses how she wants to spend the rest of her life with her husband in her interviews. In her magazine, they appear as a happy and harmonious couple. Readers admire them and are inspired by them, and want to follow the Kuriharas' example. There may be many couples who have improved their relationships by following Kurihara's advice, but in reality, even if a woman follows Kurihara's advice and acts like her, there is no guarantee that her husband and children would react the way she expected. If many

people could embody Kurihara's advice, what she promotes would not be a fantasy. However, there are more homemakers who cannot embody her advice than who can, because changing the relationships with one's husband and one's children requires their participation. In this sense, Kurihara's fantasy is more psychological than material, which is different from the fantasy Stewart creates.

It is conceivable that the difference between Stewart's and Kurihara's attitudes toward housekeeping tasks is also affected and magnified by the difference between American and Japanese cultural values. Although many Americans care about their family and value communication among the family members, its culture is based on valuing self-reliance and individualism. Compared to Japanese culture in which collectivism is more highly valued, Americans prioritize individual needs over, in this case, those of the family members. Stewart used to have a family life that included a husband and a daughter, but that part of her life collapsed because Stewart prioritized her desire to be famous and successful more than her family.<sup>51</sup> MSLO ostensibly showcases making improvements for women and their family life as the company's vision. In reality, it encourages women to prioritize what they want to do and to gain skills that enable them to live independently.

On the contrary, Kurihara emphasizes collectivistic cultural values to her readers. She shows appreciation to her family, friends, colleagues, readers and fans who support what she does in her magazines and interviews. Without their support, she is not who she is today and she could not have accomplished everything she has done. Kurihara's such

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<sup>51</sup> For more information about Stewart and her husband's divorce and events surrounding their divorce, refer to Price pp. 55-63.

attitude creates humble and modest image, and she teaches her readers „being appreciative“ is a key to maintain good relationships with family and others in their lives.

While Stewart and Kurihara try to enrich and improve women's lives psychologically by providing how-to advice, they also stimulate women's materialistic desires in order to emulate the lifestyle these two domestic gurus promote. While the psychological change takes time and often requires self-discipline and even the participation of their family members, as I discussed previously, purchasing products that Stewart and Kurihara promote gives readers an immediate material gratification of the lifestyle they admire.

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